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ABSTRACT

This report is a description of Israeli experimental parent-teacher discussion groups (KEDMAH) which were developed to promote a closer relationship between parents and their children's kindergarten teachers. Background information on the project describes the ideological basis of such a program, the importance of including parents in their children's education, basic assumptions and goals of the project and preliminary fieldwork. The project focused on getting teachers and parents of disadvantaged children together as equal participants in the children's education. Interviewers obtained pre- and post-group participation reactions from both teachers and parents. Analysis of these reactions is presented both quantitatively and qualitatively. Attitudes studied included those of teachers toward themselves, their profession, their classroom children and the children's parents; and those of the parents toward their children's education and their own feelings of self worth. Generally, the parent-teacher discussion group approach seemed to bridge cultural gaps which had existed between parents and teachers. Portions of transcripts of both interviews and group sessions are included, as well as an outline of topics used in the discussions. (ED)

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in the Behavioral Sciences

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KEDMAH

(Parent-Teacher Discussion Groups)

ED 097131

by

Dr. Nehama Nir and T. Jick

Research Report No. 172

Publication No. 525

Jerusalem, April 1973

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KEDMAH - "Parent-Teacher Discussion Groups", or - an attempt to promote contact and dialogue between the parties jointly concerned with the education of the child.

What is the point of working with the parents?

It is our belief that the major problem of the society of our time is the satisfactory situation and fundamental security of the parents, which constitute a necessary pre-condition for the raising of healthy children.

Present-day society has shaken the foundations of family life and has left parents, without distinction of race, social stratum, country of origin or community, perplexed and full of frustration. Parents in such a situation raise children who are frustrated and lacking in confidence.

The purpose of this study is twofold. On the one hand, it is to teach educators to learn from the parents by listening to them and to learn from parents requiring attention how they interact with their children, thereby making the educators more flexible in their thinking and more sensitive and appreciative of the special needs of children and parents. On the other hand it is to boost the parents' selfconfidence and to make both them and the teachers more fully aware of their, the parents', personal worth.

We hope that the child will emerge the better for the realization of these two goals. As a result of the dialogue between the mother and the kindergarten teacher, the child will enjoy a better education and be better able to develop into a citizen confident of his capacity to contribute to society and to improve it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	1
I. INTRODUCTION	4
1. Ideological background	4
2. The need for new ways of incorporating the parents in the educational process	7
3. New approaches in the evaluation of parents as partners with equal rights in child education	9
4. Basic assumptions of the project	17
5. Goals of the project	19
6. Preliminary field-work	20
II. DESCRIPTION AND METHOD OF THE RESEARCH	
1. Model	23
a. Kindergarten teachers	23
b. Parents	23
2. Guidance for the kindergarten teachers	24
3. Interviewing the parents and the kindergarten teachers	25
III. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	28
1. Analysis of the attitudes and approaches of the kindergarten teachers who took part in the experiment following the discussion groups	28
2. Analysis of the answers given by the teachers taking part in the experiment and by the control group to the questionnaire on "Involvement of Parents in Educational Work"	38
IV. PARENTS ON "KEDMAH"	50
1. The reaction of the parents (sample specimen) to the discussion groups	50
2. Summing-up	58
V. THE HUMAN ASPECTS OF "KEDMAH"	62
VI. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

FOREWORD

This project represents the realization of an educational notion that has disturbed me ever since I was a young kindergarten teacher. On the one hand, the struggles and searchings involved were intended to arouse among the parents an awareness of the educational work of the kindergarten, and on the other hand I felt that involvement of the parents in the life of the educational institution gives a new dimension to the personality of the kindergarten teacher both as a person and as a professional.

The research could not have been undertaken without the initial impetus that I received from the kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Lea de Medina, and her husband, Dr. Dan de Medina. After they had read my doctoral thesis "Parent-School Cooperation in a Changing Society" they wondered why I did not test my theoretical assumptions in the Israeli reality. Thanks to them, I ventured to carry out preliminary fieldwork, and I held the first discussion group with parents of kindergarten children in Yavne and Yahud. They responded to the invitation of Mrs. de Medina to participate in the discussions. It was these first discussions which gave me the courage to try to establish the "Kedmah" project.

My thanks go to Lea and Dr. de Medina, and also to the parents from Yavne and Yahud who helped to initiate the fundamental idea of "Kedmah" and make it practicable.

My profound gratitude is extended to Mrs. Nitza Naftali, the Chief Supervisor of the kindergartens in Israel, for without her help and support this project would not have been realized. Mrs. Naftali arranged my meeting Dr. Hanan Rappaport, Director of the National Institute for Research in Behavioural Sciences named after Henrietta Szold, and recommended me to him. Mrs. Naftali also recommended the project to the Research Committee of the Ministry of Education and Culture. I thank the members of the Committee for the trust they placed in me and for having allocated the necessary funds for implementing the project.

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Sincere thanks are also due to:

Mrs. Rina Dotan, Director of the "Dor Hemshech" department of the Moetzet Ha-Poalot (Working Women's Association), who, in the course of a friendly conversation about parent-teacher discussion groups, suggested aiding me in financing the instruction of the kindergarten teachers in group dynamics.

Mrs. Ofra Kenan, who instructed the teachers and developed in them both sensitivity and the ability to listen to others.

Mr. Abraham Tzvibel, of Bar-Ilan University, who helped me with formulating the project.

The kind staff of the Szold Institute, in particular Dr. Sara Smilansky, Mrs. Hava Frenkel, and Mrs. Lea Shaftiye, who gave me their time and greatly assisted me with the summing-up of Part One of "Kedmah".

Dr. Hanan Rappaport and Dr. Israel Lash, who assisted me in shaping the scientific framework of the project.

Mr. Todd Jick, my faithful assistant from the Szold Institute, who was active at all stages of the project.

"Kedmah" is a study devoted to kindergarten teachers and parents. Were it not for their interest, perseverance, enthusiasm, effort, and unwearying participation - both physically and mentally, this study would have remained in the form of an abstract idea only. The kindergarten teachers devoted many hours of their own time to planning the meetings and solving problems that arose, and they were always willing to overcome technical problems connected with the program.

Sincere thanks are due,therefore, to the thirteen kindergarten teachers who took part in the experiment, both for their efforts and for the encouragement and support during times of trial.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the parents of the children for continuing to come to the discussion groups every fortnight despite

00007

problems at home, changes in the weather, recording of the discussions, and inconvenient physical conditions in the kindergarten building, such as low chairs and candle-light instead of electricity. Their readiness for discussions and their sincerity in expressing their opinions will perhaps contribute a little to the improvement of the educational interactions between teacher and pupil and between parent and child.

Nehama Nir

00008

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ideological Background

A part of the democratic "Credo" is to place trust in the family, both as a social agency and as an educational authority. The particular interpretation of values and ideals in each household shapes in a basic fashion the ideal citizen of a democratic society: an active citizen, capable of mature judgement and of making responsible choices.

One of the characteristic features of a democratic society is partnership, partnership between equals, and in this case partnership between the two authorities which contribute to the education of the child. The crisis now affecting the institutions of both the family and the school system has cast doubts on the partnership status between them. A wide gap has been created between parents and teachers.

The democratization of education brought about an influx of tens of thousands of pupils from all social levels and from all ethnic groups, but the school continued to stress the traditional goals, achievements, standards of behaviour, and norms which had been determined by Western society. Communication between the family and the educational institution became difficult and complicated. Parents and teachers ceased to use a common language. Today, the relations between the home and the educational institution are characterized by hostility, a profound lack of trust and mutual accusations. The significant people in the life of a young child appear to be standing on opposite sides of the barricades precisely at a time in his life when the child acquires habits and knowledge and grows up and is trained, and absorbs values most intensively.

Ways have to be found to improve communication between the educational institution and the home. To date, most of the effort that has gone into developing programs of enrichment, motivation, and compensation has been oriented towards the educational institution and not towards the family. Consequently, these programs do not find an echo in the heart and mind of the child.

Frankenstein writes: "For a considerable part of the elementary school population and in certain social levels, for the majority of the pupils,

00009

teaching only has significance to the extent that it is based on a far-reaching integration of teaching methods, home, the cultural patterns and the family background which determine the associations of the child and his reactions, and penetration into the thought processes which are characteristic of the various age-groups and cultures."[1]

Frankenstein's claim that thought processes are influenced by social and cultural patterns, and that therefore the school must take these into account, is reinforced by the theory of Piaget who writes: "a) The ability of the individual to organize relations according to the categories of space, time and cause is apparently present from birth. b) The intellect of the individual organizes its specific structure through his personal associations with his social and cultural environment."[2]

The research of Robert Hess and Virginia Shipman in their paper: Maternal Attitudes Toward School and the Role of the Pupil also establishes that the methods of socialization in different socio-economic strata determine the differences among children in their reservoir of associations, richness of vocabulary, and thought-patterns. Theyproved that economic status influences the ways of communication in the family, the richness of expression employed by it, and the method of thinking impressed on its children. The system of control exercised by the parents, the extent of their supervision, their reinforcement of their children's approved conduct or their punishments for their children's disapproved conduct, and the number of alternatives with which they present him, all these factors impress a specific cognitive pattern on the child that grows up in any individual family.

Frankenstein's theories, the conclusions reached by Piaget, and the findings of Hess all lead to the conclusion that most of the efforts expended by teachers whose methodology is different from that which the child is accustomed to at home are utterly wasted.

The differences in patterns of thinking and living among children from various communities are also indicated by researchers in folklore such as Professor Noy, Abraham Shtahl and Eliezer Markus. For example, they demonstrate the difference between the structure and method of the Oriental tale and the structure and method of the Western tale. The Oriental tale

1 Carl Frankenstein: School without Parents; Ministry of Education, Jerusalem, 1968.

2 Piaget - source missing in original text as well as in bibliography.

30010

unfolds before the reader the moral lesson in its entirety, it being up to the narrator to interpret it and analyze it and refer to it again for the listener. In the Western tale, on the other hand, the narrator is expected to skip the moral lesson and to leave the child to grasp it on his own, through his own powers of analysis and interpretation. The kindergarten teacher, who has learnt the "Western"technique of storytelling, expects the child to see the moral by himself, thereby impeding the child from the Oriental communities who has not been reared according to this system.

In order to illustrate the difference that exists in the story-structure between the different communities, here is the version of Peretz's story "The Treasure" as told by a mother from an Oriental background in a discussion-group with kindergarten teachers about the Sabbath which was tape-recorded:

Lola: "There is a man. He goes to the synagogue on Friday night, and so he goes and suddenly he sees what appears to be a gold lira, lying there on the ground. He says, "If I take it, I who am poor and have children, I will be very happy." After that he thought, "No, it is almost the Sabbath eve. I shall not take it. I must not. I'll leave it. If it is destined to be mine, it will stay there."

He went to the synagogue, prayed, and returned, and as he returns he sees not one but two gold liras. He is rich! "Let's take it, then the children will be happy."

Then his sense tells him, "No, it is forbidden on the Sabbath. If you take it, it is not good. Leave it." "Very well, what do I care? I'll leave it. If it is destined for me it will remain there."

He went home. He prayed, didn't say a word. In the morning he went there and looks in the place and there were three liras. Now he realizes that it is a lot. Better take them. If someone comes he'll take them. "No, no, it is Sabbath. See, they are waiting for me. I'll leave them here, if they are destined for me, so be it."

Evening came, the end of the Sabbath. He made the Havdala blessing and returned home. He saw ten liras. He says: "God is great! I have kept the Sabbath. Now see how many there are. Before there was one and now I have

00011

ten." He takes them and was happy. And all the time he was thinking what he would buy and how rich he would be."[3]

In this story as told by the mother from an Oriental background there is a very striking revelation of all the conflicts and thoughts that the hero is prey to, as well as a clear expression of the moral of the tale and the lesson to be learned from his experience.

The educational system must take into account the differences in social attitudes and norms in different strata of society since methods of inculcation of knowledge and values among families from varying backgrounds must surely impress differing forms of thinking on their children and affect their intellectual makeup. It is only right that knowledge of the home background and its influence on the child should guide the planning of the teaching program as well as teaching methods, and should be incorporated in the value norms which determine the goals of every educational institution.

2. <u>The Need for New Ways of Incorporating the Parents in the Educational Process</u>.

During the Ottoman Rule and during the British Mandate, educational establishments in Palestine had to struggle for their very existence. Simultaneously, they were confronted with grave internal problems in their efforts to shape a Jewish Israeli identity. Among these problems were the need for continuous absorption of immigrants, the establishment of Hebrew as the common tongue, and the struggle to create new cultural patterns to replace the traditional Diaspora ways. The educators, who were also the writers and leaders of the Yishuv, took upon themselves the responsibility of confronting these problems and of turning parents and children into contented citizens of "the State-to-be". The teachers became the instructors of the parents, and they transferred to their homes the values of the new Hebrew culture, the reborn Hebrew language, and modern ways of educating their children.

The work with the parents was undertaken by kindergarten and other teachers on a voluntary basis in their spare time. Meetings were held, lectures were presented, and the parents were invited to school festivities. The parents, for their part, helped to enlarge the store of equipment

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3. Recorded at Ramat Eliahu on the 9th of February, 1972.

in the schools and kindergartens, as well as supplying refreshments at festivities and collecting funds for various purposes. This cooperation between the parents and the teachers, however, was one-sided, since the "Give" (teachers) was didactic-instructional and the "Take" (parents) was only technical.

After the establishment of the State, the teachers tried to continue this method of instilling in the new immigrants the existing values of the pre-State Yishuv, to continue the "melting-pot" method, but instead of integration there arose a serious conflict between the old Yishuv and the new wave of immigrants. The bulk of the new immigration was from the Middle Eastern countries, North Africa, and the Yemen. These large families, traditional, steeped in Oriental Jewish ways and culture, possessing a clear scale of values, found that their values clashed with the values of the modern, democratic, Western culture of the old Yishuv. This conflict created feelings of frustration, despair and bitterness. This sense of hopelessness among the new immigrants grew still more acute upon the discovery that their children were failing at school.

The educators once more took upon themselves the mission of raising the children of this wave of immigration to the required level and made great material and intellectual efforts to improve their educational methods.

In their attempts at educating the parents, the teachers met with a steadily widening attitude-gap. The parents were opposed to the "freedom", permissiveness, and emphasis on equality in the democratic educational institution. Fathers refused to send their children to atheistic schools, and thereby the Law of Compulsory Education was invalidated.

Teachers and kindergarten teachers, however, assembled children from transit camps and instructed them, organized meetings and talks for the parents, and taught mothers with large families the first principles of hygiene, psychology, and pedagogy.

In spite of the cultural gap, the immigrants of the 'fifties', who in a short while constituted 60% of the population of the State, greatly influenced the Eastern-European culture of the old Yishuv by their vitality

00013

and the exotic side of their nature and ways. In the sixties there took place a most interesting reversal of attitudes on the part of the European-based Yishuv towards Oriental culture and folklore. Oriental dance-groups captivated the Jewish population by their originality, costumes, and rhythms. Yemenite jewellery, with its unique designs, graced the display windows of the most select stores. Scholars began to search Oriental folklore for source material on the communities of Israel and to collect tales and tunes from the elders of the communities. Oriental dishes began to enter the European kitchen.

This reversal of attitudes, however, did not succeed in raising the standards of the children of the Oriental communities in the educational institutions, or in making them into citizens with equal rights and duties in a modern democratic state. Educators and shapers of educational policy even now do not give sufficient consideration to the values and life-style of the children of families originating in the lands of Islam.

This lack of consideration for the methods and values of families of Sephardic origin as a basis for teaching programs constitutes the background of the "Kedmah" project. The discussion groups gave the teachers the opportunity to learn from the parents. They learned about the scale of values of the families from Eastern communities, about their way of life, and how they are accustomed to looking after and raising their children.

The intellectual activity of the parents in the discussion groups made them worthy partners in the educational process. It is quite possible that this true partnership of "give" and "take" will help the children to integrate successfully and thereby assist in closing the gap between communities in Israel.

3. New Approaches in the Evaluation of Parents as Partners with Equal Rights in Child Education.

In the last three years there has developed a new dimension of two-way cooperation between teachers and parents, between professional and non-professional forces. This trend is particularly noticeable in the United States and in England where professionals, educators, researchers, and psychologists

increasingly turn to the parents as the source of reliable information for the purposes both of knowing the pupil and of enriching the teaching programs with material which is more relevant to the population of the area they work in than that they now use.

The parents, from being a source of technical assistance, have become "educational" assistants in the full sense of the word: they tell stories, ask questions, work with the children in small groups, and interview the children. Their presence has become vital.

In 1972 there appeared a book by Barbara Carter on school volunteers. She writes: "Volunteers teach the children everything: reading, arithmetic, carry out scientific experiments, teach languages - and the secret of their success lies in face to face contact with an individual child or with a small group of children, which for a kindergarten teacher or a teacher working with 35 children is very hard to do".[4]

In spite of the opening of educational institutions to parents and other volunteers, the previous situation, in which the mother learns from the kindergarten teacher how to ask questions, how to tell a story, and how to teach arithmetic, and also to imitate her behaviour still exists. The mother demonstrates no original thinking and does not reveal her methods of educating her child.

The only method likely to reveal, or capable of revealing, a diversified network of original methods from which each parent can choose that which seems most suitable is joint discussion between parents and teachers having different cultural backgrounds and different life-styles. Support for this view is found in the booklet "Learning from Parents", which contains many articles on the subject of teacher-parent interaction.

Margaret Conant states in her article in the same booklet: "Good news for the child. New forms of cooperation are developing between parents and teachers. Relations of mutual respect and understanding, which will contribute a great deal to child education. The children will suddenly sense that the people who matter most in their lives - the mother and the kindergarten teacher, are both equally interested in them. The gap between the

4 Barbara Carter, Gloria Dapper: School Volunteers; New York, Citation Press, 1972 p. 14

00015

home and the educational institution will no longer be felt, because parents and teachers will be drawn close to one another by ties of mutual respect and understanding."[5]

In the same booklet there appears an article by Katherine Chilman, who writes: "Discussion-groups of parents and teachers will strengthen the mutual empathy. Knowledge of the parents' past and of their living conditions will help the kindergarten teacher and the mother to develop a positive and fruitful communication."[6]

Most striking here is the call to teachers to take note of the parents' past and to be aware of their living conditions. This is very similar to the aims of"Kedmah".

The same interest in the attitudes of parents towards their children is noteworthy also in the research of David Weikart, Denis Doloroa, and Sara Lausser in Ipsilant, Michigan, which dealt with "The Attitude of Negro Mothers to their Children's Education, and Some Educational Implications". Among these we find: "The school must encourage dialogue between parents and children which will develop causal thinking in the child, and awareness of logical continuity,and which will also awaken the freedom to express ideas and feelings. It should also bring about in the teachers and parents an awareness of the need to listen to the child, to present him with a broad set of alternatives, and to teach him to weigh and select, and encourage the parents to take an interest in what is going on in the neighborhood, in the school or in the kindergarten.

<u>One of the techniques which has proved extremely beneficial is the meeting of kindergarten teachers and parents in small, informal discussion-groups. This technique is suitable for all age-groups. Such a meeting constitutes a basis for the development of an attitude of respect for the mother as a person. The warm atmosphere creates a basis for a relationship of true equality, and not one of superiority, and lack of equality."</u>[7]

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5 "Learning from Parents" in <u>Childhood Education</u> - December 1971 , p. 2

6 "idem"

7 Weikart, D. et al. "Longitudinal Results of the Ipsilant Perry Preschool Project": Scope Educational Research Foundation, Ipsilant, Michigan, (1970)

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Ira Gordon, in the booklet of the A.S.C.D. of 1971, also writes: "The role of the discussion-groups between parents and educators is to reinforce the ability of the parents to educate and raise their children.

We - people involved in education, have always blamed the parents for failing to educate their children, but when we were given charge of the children we did not succeed either in teaching them or educating them. We forbade the parents to teach reading and writing, and we ourselves failed to inculcate reading. The relations between parent and teacher can be compared to those of an architect and his client. Just as the architect tries to build a house in accordance with the wishes of the client and his personality and style, so is it up to the teacher to educate the child in conformity with his home background, the life style of the parents and the customs of the family. The tender age is the ideal time to bring different cultures together. Teachers and parents from different cultural backgrounds learn from one another and in so doing improve their roles as educators and parents".[8]

McVicker Hunt, in his new book, "The Challenge of Incompetence and Poverty",[9] writes about the quality of human life in a close or distant environment. Man's happiness does not depend only on spiritual factors, but also on his intellectual ability to overcome ignorance, lack of achievement, or , as Festinger puts it, "cognitive dissonance". People who live in areas of deprivation suffer from this phenomenon acutely because they lack the means to struggle against their environment and to acquire all the advantages presented by the affluent society by way of the mass media. This society requires the ability to think in abstract terms, to solve problems, and to anticipate and plan for the future.

Those born in areas of deprivation do not have the opportunity to realize these achievements. They are not able to select for themselves the system of values and norms that is required so that they may eventually come to regard themselves as people of worth in the organized society.

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8 Ira J. Gordon: "On Early Learning" A.S.C.D., 1971

9 J. McVicker Hunt: The Challenge of Incompetence and Poverty, University of Illinois Press,(1969).

The great innovation in the revised programs for young children is the large amount of time devoted to the parents. Hunt enumerates a number of programs which are aimed at encouraging parents living in deprived conditions to educate their children and qualify them for modern society. It has been proved that, as a rule, even parents from the most backward areas can become excellent teachers of their children.

In one of the studies (Karnes, Studley, Wright, Hogins - 1968) the mothers participating in the experiment were asked to prepare educational games and to teach others how to use them at home with their children. The mothers prepared attractive educational materials, dolls, flannel boards, lotto, association games, geometrical shapes, account books, a tray with household items for sorting and classification, and games for classifying clothing and furniture.

In learning the games the mothers talked with the kindergarten teacher in small groups of five. The mothers even held a "Role-playing" game so that each could learn from the others how to use the materials. The results of this experiment were impressive.

Professor Hunt sums up: "It appears that at the tender age of the child the parents are the cheapest and most appropriate teachers for their children. And this is a most promising discovery."[10]

But it is not only the children who emerge with profit from this cooperation between parents and teachers. The educational experience gained by the parents as associates in the educational process of their children also greatly enriches their own lives. In the study of Miller (1968) in which mothers participated in the educational work in the kindergarten, the mothers expressed interest in learning a profession. A quarter of their number registered with the School of Practical Nursing and completed the course, while others became qualified cosmeticians. Some of the mothers, functionally illiterate, desired to learn to read and write and did, in fact do so. These mothers also initiated many varieties of social events such as joint picnics, weekend get-togethers, a mobile library in the neighborhood, and sporting contests between mothers and fathers. The bank

10 J. McVicker Hunt: The Challenge of Incompetence and Poverty, University of Illionois Press,(1969).

00018

deposits of these families increased and there was also improvement in the amount and quality of the equipment in their homes.[11]

This involvement of the parents in the life of the kindergarten and the educational institution is one of the most effective ways of preventing failure on the part of the children.

Hunt proposes the opening of centers for parents and children, infants, and babies. These centers would not only furnish information to the mothers, but also attract the fathers, older children, and people in the neighborhood who are not directly involved with educational affairs. The neighborhood center would in fact become a center of education and of the fight against ignorance, incompetence and frustration.

In California there exists a wide network of parent education. In 1971 a book by Evelyn Pickarts and Jean Fargo, "Parents Education - Towards Parental Competence" was published. Among other things, the authors write: "The fostering of awareness in the parents, the first teachers of the child, of their role as teachers, is the most important aspect of education in our day."[12] They cite Brim who, in his book, analyzed the history of parent education in America from the 19th century until modern times. Brim writes: "Today, the primary goal of every program of parent education should be: to transform the parents into independent and creative individuals, to increase their power of self-evaluation and to develop the rational attitude of the parent to his parental role."[13]

With this in mind, the authors suggest making use of all the new systems that have appeared in the realm of education, i.e., the use of the mass media, individual counselling, and parent group discussions.

They point to the system discussion groups as being "the best method of developing the parents into worthwhile individuals possessing autonomous judgement. This is the optimal method for promoting active and effective learning by the parents without distinction of class or community".[14]

11 Miller, 1968 - source missing in bibliography.

12 Evelyn Pickarts and Jean Fargo: Parents Education - Toward Parental Competence - N.Y., Appleton Century Crofts (1971).

13 "idem"

14 "idem"

00013

The discovery of the parents as the best source of information has also been made in England. John and Elisabeth Newson, in their research study on "Four-Year-Olds in the Urban Community",[15] indicate a belief in the principle that the mother is the one who knows her child best and best understands him. They interviewed the mothers of 700 children in order to obtain the most reliable description of the child from birth until adolescence. The researchers also wished to understand the behaviour of mothers towards their children and how it changes, both with reference to the child's growing up and to his specific needs. They wished to investigate certain patterns of interaction between mother and child in order to reach conclusions with regard to the bringing up of the child. And indeed one of the most surprising results of their research is that, in spite of differences in class and living conditions, all the mothers revealed an unusual insight into the personalities of their children.

Robison and Robison wrote in 1968: "The problem of the gap that exists between the culture of the home and that of the educational institution estranges the boy from his parents. It is true that ultimately the child has to face up to the culture of the modern society and to acquire intellectual skills and proficiencies in order to succeed in society. However, it is likely that the intensifying of his cultural background, while he is still in his tender years will enable him to cope more successfully in the world he lives in."[16]

Haim Adler writes: In order to achieve large-scale absorption of the child coming from different communities into Israeli society - a teaching program has to be developed by means of the creation of frameworks, subjects and methods which will help the child from a different social-cultural background to succeed in school and in life.

Haim Adler also stresses the importance of the early years to the child's development and the importance of cooperation with the mother as the point of departure for many and diverse methods in childhood education.

15 John and Elisabeth Newson: Four Years Old in the Urban Community, Penguin Books, (1968).

16 Robison & Robison in Programs for Disadvantaged, ed. Harry Passow, New York, T.C. Press, (1968).

00020

Dr. Richard Goldman of the University of Haifa published his study on parent-teacher cooperation in the education of the child. Dr. Goldman adopted a special manner of working with parents which was developed at the University of Pittsburgh. His approach to the partnership of parents and teachers is different from that we have followed in the "Kedmah" project, but in explaining his reasons for adopting the Pittsburgh program he writes: "Although immigrants from Islamic countries lack attainment orientation, they do possess a rich culture and therefore they cannot be termed culturally deprived."[17] The researcher appeals to parents who wish to include the culture of their community in the school program to become more involved in the schools while he asks the teachers to transform the parents from "clients" into "helpers". Dr. Goldman's hypothesis is that "the participation of the parents in the educational processes closes the gap between the school and the neighborhood in which the educational institution is located."[18]

Let us sum up this section by quoting the principles of Margaret Mead in the book "Cultural Patterns and Technical Change". She writes:

> This section deals with those findings of psychology and psychiatry dealing with the role of man in a situation of cultural change. The observations are directed principally to those who are engaged in daily work bound up with the process of change - in the rural school, in the agricultural demonstration center or in the public health center - those who come in direct contact with a limited number of people who require their guidance and care.
>
> The people who execute the change - the teacher, the agricultural instructor, the nurse - must recognize that the behaviour patterns, beliefs and attitudes that they are used to are not universal or self-evident. They must understand that their manner of thinking, calculation of time, judging behaviour in giving expression to admiration or disgust - like the forms

17-18 Richard Goldman: The Cross Cultural Adaptation of a Program to Involve Involve Parents in their Children's Learning, Haifa University, (July 1972).

00021

of behaviour, the beliefs and attitudes of that community where they are trying to bring about change - are the fruit of learning and tradition.

The beliefs and attitudes of the population being assisted must be regarded as being possessed of functional utility. It is they which confer attractiveness on the personality of each human being, and enable him to feel that he is an individual defined by name, identifiable, the same person he was yesterday, even if older or more respected, or just raised to a more elevated position. They enable him to see uniformity in his life's experiences, to recognize various phenomena and to identify them as'gifts'.[19]

4. Basic Assumptions of the Project

1. The first assumption made is the necessity of the teacher's recognizing the home and its cultural background and her need to learn the methods of socialization and education of the parents in that home.

2. The second assumption is based upon Frankenstein's conception with regard to the past of the parents in times of crisis.

He writes: "In a crisis of transition the parents are required to represent in the consciousness of the child the values of their cultural past, first and foremost to stimulate the imagination and synthetic thinking, and not as teaching matter. For, as teaching matter they are not able to add prestige, and so will be regarded as of inferior value by the child; whereas, as factors of stimulation these values are likely to bring the child closer to his parents, to preserve the tie between them, to constitute a counterweight to the forces that attract and work in the new reality and which draw the child away from the parental home."[20]

Frank Peisman also writes on the need to know the culture of the various ethnic groups and communities. His approach to culture is a pluralistic one

19 Margaret Mead: "Cultural Patterns and Technical Change", UNESCO, edited M. Mead.

20 Carl Frankenstein: "Man in Crisis", Am Oved and Dvir, Tel Aviv 1964, p. 76.

00022

which emphasises the positive values of each ethnic group. Reisman does not equate culture with environment. His approach makes the distinction between the environment and the living conditions of a given group on one hand and its culture on the other hand. He searches for the man who lives in poverty conditions and who struggles with his environment. A man's "culture" includes beliefs, values, and ways which possess a long history.[21] The educator who adopts the Reisman approach will try to understand the beliefs, values and ways of behavior of these groups in order to be helped by them to know the child and his education.

The foregoing assumptions stress the need for positive attitudes towards the parents' past, in order to boost their "positive and self-conscious ego" and to rehabilitate them in the eyes of the child as images to be identified with.

3. The third assumption that the meeting between the teacher and the parents is a meeting between equals, will add a new dimension to the teacher's personality and her educational work and will make it possible for her to learn the forms of interaction between parent and child which are based upon the values and cultural patterns ingrained in the family.

To sum up, the psychological assumption of the project stemmed from the discovery of the parents as a source of information of prime importance for the purpose of establishing teaching programs and teaching methods in the educational institution.

The philosophical assumption stemmed from the pluralist approach to cultures and their values.

The educational assumption stems from the desire to create a dialogue between the parents and teachers as equals, worthy individuals who respect each other and who are sensitive to one another's problems and those of the children and who strive through cooperation to improve education and to make life better.

These assumptions dictated the goals of the project.

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21 David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Renel Denney. The Lonely Crowd. New Haven: Yale University Press, (1950) p. 40.

5. Goals of the Project

a. To foster the "positive self-concept" of parents in general, and of disadvantaged parents in particular, and to awaken in them the awareness of their educational role.

b. To arouse in the kindergarten teacher sensitivity to the educational and evaluative interaction between the parents and their children based on the socio-cultural background of the home.

c. To enrich the teaching program in the kindergarten with material which illustrates the diversity of cultures among the communities of Israel.

d. To create a widespread movement which will establish parent circles and discussion groups for the promotion of dialogue between teachers and parents on a footing of complete equality.

In order to realize these goals special techniques are called for. The discussion groups will serve as an optimal meeting-ground for teachers and parents as equals. Aline Auerbach explains the technique of discussion groups and pinpoints their advantages:

"This is the best means of bringing about a readiness to learn and to produce behavioural changes. The discussion groups constitute a way of showing the parents that they can serve as a source of information, that they are capable of solving their problems and enriching their own life-content as well as that of their families. The contents of the discussions are familiar to the parents and arouse in them the desire to push ahead and learn more. In this situation of discussion the parents acquire a sense of responsibility, learn from each other and widen their horizons. The increase in points of view that comes from other individuals, the various forms of gaining experience, the diverse ideas and answers - all these create a rich, dynamic and realistic meeting-ground for the teachers and the parents. The importance of the parents as people grows, they feel themselves to be people of worth, and their positive self-image is correspondingly affirmed".[22]

22 Aline Auerbach, "Parents Learn Through Discussion", New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (1968), p. 12.

00021

The discussions in the context of the discussion group awaken in the parents an awareness of their educational role, while the kindergarten teacher learns to listen to, to understand, and to respect the parents as people of worth. This understanding and empathy will also add to the kindergarten teacher's personality, both as an educator and as an individual.

This system of the discussion group is accepted today in various fields: psychology, social work, industrial psychology, and so on. The dynamics of the participation in the group bring about changes of attitudes and learning on the part of the participants.

Whereas in the past the discussion groups possessed a distinctly one-way character, their aim being to teach, to educate, and develop the parents, today the aim is to facilitate two-way learning, learning on the part of both the parents and the teachers. The assumption is that something can be learned from every parent, and the situation of the discussion group reveals the best in each parent and enables the teacher to learn from all.

6. Preliminary Fieldwork

In order to test this method of the discussion group, preliminary fieldwork was carried out in 1971. A group discussion was held with the participation of 25 parents of children in kindergartens in Yahud and Yavne. They were invited to Yahud youth-club by the teachers. The discussion took place before an audience of eighty kindergarten teachers, and twenty mothers and five fathers participated.[23]

Group Discussion Leader: Good evening. We have come here, we the kindergarten teachers, to learn from you, the parents, how to teach your children better. We all know that you are the first teachers of your children. At times we see that things which we do not succeed in teaching the children, you do successfully. For example, the teacher says, "Shlomo, take the cube and put it on the doll's chair." The child is confused and doesn't manage to carry out the command,

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[23] The discussion was recorded and the language is authentic.

whereas you send him to the shop, tell him to bring a number of items, and he does so. So I would ask you to tell us what and how you teach at home, and we shall learn from you.

Eliahu: I am the father of five children. All of them went to the kindergarten. Teachers never asked me how I teach. It is really very nice.

Suzy: I relied on the teacher. She knows how to teach the children. Perhaps I don't teach them?

Abraham: Of course I teach. I teach arithmetic, you know, counting. For example, I go up the stairs with Yossie. I say to him, "You count, fellow, count...one, two..." If he knows, good, if he doesn't, up we go again, then down again, until he knows it.

Rachel: I tell a story, Red Riding Hood, the Sleeping Beauty, but I don't like it. It's stupid. I invent a story and then my little girl sits quietly, so quietly. I tell her how I was a little girl in Morocco, and how there were thieves there and how I ran away, and how I loved our donkey. It's a bit silly, but my little girl likes it.

Meir: I sing to my children. I come home very tired but I love to sing, and I sing all kinds of songs from the radio till they are all asleep. The first to fall asleep is my wife.

Yedida: I very much want to know what they teach in the kindergarten, because I also want to teach my children so that they grow up clever and learned. I like them to count all the things that I have at home, ten beds, ten shirts, ten plates, and that's it.

Rachel: I even teach him the ABC. How? I sit with him and say to him, "The most important thing is to read, and the one who knows how to read knows everything. A doctor knows how to read, doesn't he? A pilot knows how to read, doesn't he?" Of course, he doesn't always want to, so what do I do? I give him a red sweet or a cake and he is happy and learns.

00026

Yedida: I heard them teaching in the kindergarten - big and small - what do I do? I also teach. I give a big cake and a small cake and he laughs and says, "I want the big cake."

Leila: I walk along the road, and I teach him the traffic lights. "At red light you always stand still, child, do you hear? Stand still. On green, you go, you go."

Summing Up

Massouda: What a lovely day! Like a party, you sit and talk. It's good to talk. You see and you know something. It was worth coming a long way to Yahud from Yavne.

Shoshana: Look, I have six children, and I always come to meetings of kindergarten teachers, but it's always the same thing. She speaks, all well and good, but you get tired of it. It's always the same. Today it's really something new and it was very, very interesting to me. I see how the other parents teach and I shall also teach my child. If they know I also know."

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS METHOD

1. Model

a. Kindergarten teachers

Thirteen Kindergarten teachers were chosen according to the following criteria:

1. Kindergarten teachers who in their work over the years showed willingness to work with the parents and to devote their free time to them.
2. Kindergarten teachers working in deprived neighborhoods populated with large families living in conditions of deprivation.
3. Kindergarten teachers working in neighborhoods adjacent to those disadvantaged neighborhoods and which are populated by families of the upper middle class, where one of the parents, at least, has an academic background, and where the family income is comparatively high.
4. Young kindergarten teachers, experienced or less experienced, who show sensitivity to the problems of the children.

Of the 13 teachers, nine work with children in need of special care, and four with children from middle class homes. Nine were under my supervision and four under the supervision of inspectors from other areas.

b. Parents

Four hundred mothers of children from these kindergartens were selected, two-thirds disadvantaged and a third well-to-do. In general, the disadvantaged mothers match the traditional criteria for classifying the special care population of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Welfare.

1. Families who immigrated from traditional societies in the Middle East.
2. Parents lacking formal education.
3. Parents who have not experienced the democratic way of life.
4. Families with many children.
5. Families in the low-income bracket living in substandard housing.

About a quarter of the parents from the disadvantaged areas in the project were born in Israel and have experienced democratic processes, do not have more than three children and have completed elementary school.

00028

Most of the middle class parents have an academic background, belong to the upper-middle-class social level, and work in the free professions. Most of these families live in homes equipped with sophisticated household appliances. Each family has at least one car. Their homes are situated in neighborhoods which preserve their exclusive character.

2. Guidance for the Kindergarten Teachers

One of the difficulties in teacher and kindergarten teacher conducted discussion groups is that such professionals are accustomed to teach. They have a permanent tendency to talk, to instruct, and to direct. In order to avoid a one-way relationship between the teachers and the parents, where the teacher speaks and the parents listen, the kindergarten teachers involved in the project took a 30-hour course in ways of organizing group discussions. The course was taught by Mrs. Ofra Kenan.

Here are the objectives of the course and the topics as defined by Mrs. Kenan:

a. Clarification of the objective: Discussions with the parents.
b. Clarification of the role: Coordinator of the discussion.
c. Awareness of group and behavioural processes during the discussion.
d. Training and practice in discussions with groups of "parents" involving role-playing to assure competence in the techniques studied.

The course, to some degree, shook the self-confidence of the teachers in their professional ability. They were rather terrified at the thought of the encounter with the parents. Accordingly, "rehearsals" in which the hostess also led the discussion were held in the homes of the teachers in an informal atmosphere. The "rehearsals" to some extent diminished the anxiety and lack of confidence felt by the teachers.

On January 16th, 1972, the discussion groups between the kindergarten teachers and the parents in all thirteen kindergartens began. The agenda of the meetings were very tentatively established.

00029

The kindergarten teachers and the parents were free to decide upon the subject matter of the discussions in accordance with the needs of the parents involved. (For the topics dealt with by the discussion groups see Appendix A).

3. Interviewing the Parents and the Kindergarten Teachers

Before the fieldwork began, three tentative questionnaires were submitted to the parents in order to investigate the following:

a. The attitude of the parents to their culture.
b. The pedagogical activity of the parents.
c. The educational activity of the parents in instilling values in their children.

Three tentative questionnaires were also submitted to the kindergarten teachers in order to investigate:

a. The teacher's attitude to her profession.
b. Her educational activity in the sphere of values.
c. Her pedagogical activity.

After the preparation of the questionnaires, interviewers were selected to interview the parents. Thirty six interviewers from the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and Bar Ilan University were chosen in accordance with the following criteria:

a. They were women
b. They were from the Oriental communities
c. They were sensitive persons
d. They were experienced at interviewing
e. They were experienced in meeting disadvantaged people.

Some of the interviewers did not fulfil the latter requirements but adapted themselves to meet them.

The interviewers were given instructions, once in Tel Aviv and once in Jerusalem according to the following program:

Instruction of the Group of Interviewers*

9:30 - 10:00 Dr. Nehama Nir - Explanation of the project. Explanation of the general and cultural background of the project population. Description of the parents' household - the position of the mother in the family. Customs of hospitality in Oriental

*Prepared by Todd Jick

communities. How to dress for the interview, i.e., (the Oriental family is opposed to women's slacks).

10:00 - 10:30 Dr. Lash and Todd Jick - Description of the questionnaire, ways of interviewing, problems likely to arise during the interview.

10:30 - 10:50 Recess, and study of questionnaires by the interviewers.

10:50 - 11:00 Questions by students with regard to the questionnaires.

11:00 - 11:15 Interview training - students interview one another using role-playing techniques.

11:15 - 11:30 Organization of the interviews - address, time; return of questionnaires.

The next stage- the setting out of the interviews for the neighborhoods of the project population. The interviews required four weeks, and when they were finished we met the group of interviewers and recorded their impressions.

Impressions Gained During the Interviews in Neve Tzahal

"In the interview conducted in Neve Tzahal I found big differences among the families. Below I shall indicate the differences in educating the child found among different families...."

If you consider the interview conducted with the Jackson family, you will note that the parents devote considerable attention to their children's education, as is customary in a modern family. I was able to witness an unusual dedication to the children's education. This family is so concerned that the children should lack nothing and that they should not feel the lack of anything that the parents are even prepared to take loans from people and to borrow things for their children's sake.

Another family I interviewed is the Rahimi family. This family, too, is interested in giving its children a good education so that they can succeed in life.

In the Mizrahi family, on the other hand, I met a father who in actual fact takes no interest in his children or in what they do. The mother told me that he supports the family, comes home quietly, reads quietly, in fact behaves as if he were leading an independent life.

In the Abidar family I encountered a still more peculiar phenomenon. Neither parent concerns himself with the children's education. They content themselves with providing them with food and clothing. The father did not wish to proceed with the interview. Although the father* owns a grocery store and has connections with the entire neighborhood, the family is isolated socially, and this, in my opinion, is a strange phenomenon.

In general terms, all the families received us very nicely, especially the Rahimi and Jackson families. Most of the mothers enjoyed the questions, and, in my opinion, the interest in the questions led to an awakening of concern in the family for the education of the children.

*This father today takes part in every discussion and exhibits extreme concern about his children's education.

00032

III. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The informal character of the discussion groups prevents appropriate evaluation; the frankness of the discussions, the lively or reflective facial expressions, these are not registered in the tables and correlations. It is also difficult to include the spontaneity of the reactions and the latent allusions.

The recordings of the discussions represent authentic material extracted from parental discussions at all 13 kindergartens and can serve as trustwortny material for analysis of content. These recordings certainly reflect the deep empathy and emotional and mental involvement of the parents as they discuss their children's education.

In this section of the research we have tried to evaluate in quantitative terms only one factor: the influence of the discussion groups on the thirteen teachers. We have also tried to gather together first impressions following the discussions from a representative sample of the parents, and we shall introduce them at the end of this section.

The summing up of the "Kedmah" project and the analysis of its results have been undertaken in three stages.

Stage 1: Analysis of the educational positions and attitudes of the kindergarten teachers following the discussion groups.

Stage 2: Analysis of the attitudes of the parents towards themselves and their culture following the discussions.

Stage 3: Analysis of the influence of the discussion groups on the roles of the parents as parents.

The summary given here deals solely with Stage 1.

1. Analysis of the attitudes and approaches, following the discussion groups, of the kindergarten teachers who took part in the experiment.

Three main problems were investigated:

a. Did the discussion groups influence the attitude of the kindergarten teacher to her profession?

b. Did the discussion groups influence the attitude of the teacher to the parents?

c. Did the discussion groups affect the interaction between the kindergarten teacher and the children?

The investigation was undertaken in two areas:

00033

1. An initial and then a final test, in which we tried to ascertain whether a change had taken place in the attitudes of the kindergarten teachers and in their educational activity before and after the discussion groups.
2. A comparison between the teachers involved in the experiment and a control group with regard to the participation of the parents in the educational work in the kindergarten.

The criteria for comparison between the two groups of teachers, the experimental group and the control group, are the following:

1. The age of the kindergarten teachers.
2. Seniority in the work.
3. Type of children at the kindergarten, i.e., disadvantaged or middle class.
4. Age of children at the kindergarten, i.e., three to four and aged five.

First, the regularity of parent participation in the discussion groups was checked. (See Table 1, on next page).

The participation of disadvantaged parents in the discussion groups is conspicuous for its constancy. Of the 252 parents who began to take part in the discussion groups, only 19 defected. The rate of frequency of attendance of these parents is 93%.

The rate of frequency of attendance of middle-class parents is lower, standing at 70% (92 parents began and 62 completed the project).

This phenomenon corroborates the assumption of the project that the disadvantaged parents in a situation of complete equality exhibit an active interest in the destiny of their children and their education. The very act of leaving the house in order to listen to the opinions of others and to express ideas and thoughts constituted, it would appear, a factor of appeal for the disadvantaged parents, both because of the novelty of the project and because of the feeling that they constitute a focus of sincere interest on the part of the teachers with regard to their way of life, attitudes and opinions on raising and educating children.

00034

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Table 1

Frequency of Parent Participation
in Discussion Groups

	Kindergarten	Began	Finished
Disadvantaged	No. 1	36	34
	No. 2	25	24
	No. 3	22	17
	No. 4	26	20
	No. 5	30	29
	No. 6	30	30
	No. 7	32	32
	No. 8	29	27
	No. 9	22	20
Total:		252	233
[illegible]	No. 1	25	17
	No. 2	25	17
	No. 3	27	14
	No. 4	15	14
Total:		92	62

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A. The Attitude of the Teachers to their Profession Before and After The Discussion Groups

Before the project began (initial test), three questionnaires, to which written responses were requested, were submitted to all thirteen kindergarten teachers taking part in the experiment. The questionnaires dealt with the following:

a. The teacher's attitude to her profession

b. Activity in inculcating values

c. Didactic-educational activity

After the project (final test), one questionnaire only, which was a condensed version of the first three was submitted; the teachers were again asked to give written responses.

It emerged that all thirteen kindergarten teachers had a positive attitude to their profession, both before and after the discussion groups. They all stressed that the profession of kindergarten teacher contributes to both knowledge and satisfaction and makes a person "worthy of respect". When the teachers were asked if the profession of kindergarten teacher was a worthwhile one, there were three teachers who, before the project, had not considered this point at all, or had assigned it to the lowest level, and who, after the project, changed their minds and emphasized that the profession of kindergarten teacher is a worthwhile one.

The most striking change to have taken place in all thirteen teachers after "Kedmah" is that the teachers began to regard their profession as one that enhances their personality both as educators and as persons. They all remark that the very fact that they learnt to listen to other people, to take note of different forms of expression, and to understand the attitudes of people from diverse social strata and various cultures - "enriched their being, broadened their thinking, and made them concerned about their fellow-men."

All the teachers used the expression "I discovered that the parents are human beings". This discovery gave them the added feeling that this system of dialogue confers extra prestige on the person and the profession. They were also asked if they would be prepared to change their profession. In the final questionnaire, they asserted that they were not prepared to do so, "and if I have to, I would like to work in a similar profession, one

60036

which will enable me to help people, like social work, or work with people on probation."

In conclusion we may quote from one of the five kindergarten teachers who did want to change their professions, "Today, after the research, the profession has taken on a new meaning for me."

An interesting tendency was noted among the majority of the kindergarten teachers (ten out of thirteen). In response to the question "Which is the image with which the child should identify at kindergarten?" most of the teachers in the first test answered, "The kindergarten teacher", whereas in the final test they answered "The kindergarten teacher and the teacher's assistant (a para-professional)". It appears that a change has taken place in the attitude of the teacher to the non-professional people as partners in the educational process. One teacher writes, "Every person, and not only the professional educator, contributes to the development of the children's creativity, their studies, and their social behaviour."

B. The Attitude of the Kindergarten Teacher to the Parents Before and After the Discussion Groups.

Three of the eight questions put to the kindergarten teachers in the initial questionnaire concerning the attitude of the teacher to the parents were also included in the final questionnaire. The teachers' answers reflected in a significant manner the changes that had taken place in their attitude to parents in general, in their attitude to the contribution made by the parents to their educational work, and in their attitude to the "Kedmah" research.

Particular notice should be taken of the lengthier and more detailed answers to the questions. Prior to the discussion groups, the replies were brief and very general. Following the discussion groups, the answers grew richer and more specific, and the new relationship that had developed with the parents could be sensed in them.

In the first questionnaire the teachers noted their feelings towards the parents as "a good feeling", "a pleasant feeling", "establishing links", "good natured feeling", "relaxed feeling", whereas in the second they were using phrases like "partners in the educational process", "friends of equal

00037

worth", "close comradeship", "almost no division between us", "they are prepared now to lend me a hand, to the same extent that I am prepared to extend mine to them", "an attitude of great respect for their problems and their struggles", "they are an integral part of the teaching life".

The other notable change, which is especially pronounced in the final test, occurred in the attitude of the teacher to the contribution made by the parents to the educational process.

In the question: What does working with the parents add?

a. Knowledge of the child?
b. Improvement in your educational work?
c. Improvement in your intellectual development?
d. Improvement in your attitude to people?

No significant change appears to have occurred in sections a and d. Both in the initial and in the final survey the teachers pointed out that their work with the parents added "knowledge of the child" and"improved relationship with people". But a change took place with regard to section b. Eight of the thirteen kindergarten teachers remarked that working with the parents had also improved their educational work. The concept of "improvement" altered following the discussion groups. Prior to the activity with the parents, the teachers declared that working with the parents gave greater direction to their educational work in the kindergarten. After the dialogue with the parents, the teachers wrote that "educational methods can be adapted from the parents", "the talks with the parents enable me to undertake a more individual approach towards the child and this is the most important contribution", the talks lead to "new approaches to the children".

The most substantial change took place in the attitude of the teachers to the parents as contributing to their intellectual development (section c). Ten of the thirteen teachers remarked in the initial survey that the work with the parents did not contribute to their intellectual development, while in the final one, only one of them retained this viewpoint. Most of the teachers wrote that they had learnt to accept different cultures, new customs, and ways of thinking different from their own. Obviously they must have been intellectually enriched.

00038

To conclude, we shall quote from what one of the teachers said concerning the contribution of the parents to the educational process:

> "I acquired knowledge from all my teachers, and from the parents most of all."

The last question in the questionnaire on the attitude of the kindergarten teacher to the parents dealt with the contribution made by the "Kedmah" project to the teachers. This question was put to the teachers twice: after three meetings, and at the end of the project.

The common aspects of the teachers' reaction to, and impression of, the Kedmah project were the discovery that the parents were human beings, great satisfaction with the social encounter, intellectual pleasure from the stories of the various communities and insight into the customs and way of life of the various communities.

One kindergarten teacher writes: "I discovered cultural values that I had previously not attached any significance to." Most of the teachers noted the help and support that the parents gave to each other, the involvement of the fathers in the discussion groups, the rise in self-esteem of the parents, the increased pride of the parents in their own cultural heritage, the new prestige acquired by each cultural heritage in the eyes of parents from other communities and the discovery of the value of childhood and biography and their considerable importance in human life.

Seven of the teachers remarked on the reverberation that Kedmah caused in the neighborhood. The stock of those parents who took part in the project rose considerably in the eyes of their neighbours and the latter even began to exhibit interest in the phenomenon. What had happened so that suddenly parents were asking questions and not being lectured to? Parents of older children also expressed interest in the project. A number of primary school teachers inquired about the project, as did the technicians who recorded the conversations. One, whose interest was greatly aroused, brought his wife to listen to the discussion.

00039

The kindergarten teachers' amazement at the thinking ability revealed by the parents was a marked feature of their replies, as was their wonder at the parents' psychological and pedagogical approach to the problems of their children's education and upbringing. Before "Kedmah", the teachers thought that they were dealing with parents without any intellectual capacity. In the course of the research, they were surprised to discover that the mothers were capable of thinking and expressing their thoughts. One teacher writes, "I acquired a new skill: to listen to another person, to learn more than to teach, and to pay attention to the mothers' ideas concerning their children's education."

C. The Change in Activity in the Inculcation of Values on the Part of the Kindergarten Teachers Following the Discussion Groups.

The aim of the inculcation of values is to instill moral values and modes of behaviour in the children. The attitude and position of the kindergarten teacher with regard to the term "value" must of necessity determine its mode of inculcation.

The teachers taking part in the experiment were asked to answer such questions as: "What is a good child?", "How do you teach a child to give way?", and "How do you teach a child to be responsible?".

It cannot be said that many changes were discernible in the answers given by the teachers in the initial and the final questionnaires. However, there developed a new approach to the concept of the term "value" in the final survey, a more relativistic attitude to values. To the question "What is a good boy?" in the first survey, the answer given, as a rule, attempted to define the "good boy" as one "who gives way", "one who helps another", and so forth. To the same question in the final survey, the teachers answered in a different spirit: "Good is a relative thing", "there is that which the mother considers good, and there is that which I consider good", "what is good is determined according to the way one views things in the environment in which the child grows up".

A similar answer was given in relation to the term "beautiful", with the addition of a folkloristic nuance. One of the teachers wrote that she compares different styles of dress characteristic of different communities, and so on. An increasingly folkloristic-relativistic approach can be discerned among the teachers involved in the experiment.

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Another change that is noteworthy is the transfer of the group discussion system from the parents to the children. Two kindergarten teachers wrote that they asked the children "What is a good child?" and they recorded the replies they received. They brought the recording to the discussion groups of the parents who were dealing with the notion of the value "good" with reference to the young child and the parents respectively.

Another change is indicated by an enrichment in the mode of inculcating values, and this is notable in the answers of the teachers to the question, "How do you teach a child to be 'good', 'kind', 'to give way', 'to help another', 'to be a good friend', etc.?"

Nine out of 13 of the teachers pinpointed in the second survey the story and moral lesson contained in it as a means of inculcating values and ways of behaviour whereas three had mentioned this in the initial questionnaire. In this, the stories told by the parents in the discussion groups apparently exerted an influence on the educational method of the teacher. Parents, particularly from the Oriental communities, told many stories with a moral content, stories which teach how to be good, content with little, dilligent, and so on.

Another change in the method of inculcating values took place in the method of instilling ways of behaviour in the kindergarten, at home, and in the street.

Whereas in the first test the majority of the teachers had alluded to "the personal example" of the kindergarten teacher as the way to instill suitable forms of behaviour in the second test all the teachers specified the method of joint discussion and thinking with the children as the better way.

Conclusion

Following the discussion groups, most of the teachers changed their attitudes towards values and methods of instilling them:

1. A relatively pluralistic approach.
2. Joint discussion with the children about forms of behavior.
3. The use of the story and the moral lesson in it as a means of inculcating values and modes of behaviour.

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D. The Change that Took Place in the Didactic Educational Activity of the Kindergarten Teacher Following the Discussion Groups

In the didactic sphere, no essential change took place. This can be explained by the intensive nature of the methodological instruction given to the teachers in the training college for teachers and kindergarten teachers, by the instruction of supervisors on discussion days and in advanced training sessions, and by the manuals issued by "The Supervisory Center for Kindergartens" in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Work patterns have been evolved through these means which it would be difficult to change.

However, in the final survey, there is a marked preference for the discussion as a didactic means in contrast to the preferences expressed in the first questionnaire.

A question involving both the didactic approach of the teachers and the participation of the parents in their children's educational work dealt with homework. This question was asked: "Do you give homework, and if so, why?" In the final survey, the teachers remarked in their answers: "The parents will help me to understand the child in a more individual manner, and so I shall be able to teach him better", "To arouse in the parents the desire to ask their children questions", "The parents will help me to enrich the subject matter in the kindergarten","We give the parents the feeling that they are being relied upon".

The didactic-educational activity of the kindergarten teacher should preferably be studied by observation and not only by questionnaires. We hope that we shall have another opportunity to investigate the influence of the discussion groups on the interaction between the teacher and child and the mother and child in a scientific manner, reflecting the transformation in behaviour as well as the declared change.

In summing up this part of the analysis of the findings, we shall give a few samples of the impressions of the teachers who took part in the project.

E. Kindergarten Teachers on "Kedmah"

"I learned to know the world of the child and his home. The connection between the kindergarten and the parents was strengthened. I learned what is emotionally important to the parents. Also who are the heroes who play such an important part in their stories and in their thinking (Elija the Prophet and the Rabbi). I learned the customs of the communities and I make

00042

use of them in teaching about the Sabbath and festivals in the kindergarten."

"In my work as a kindergarten teacher who always worked with parents, the method of the discussion as a meeting between parents is a new method to me. I approached it with curiosity, trepidation, and hope. After the meetings, I can say that where the kindergarten teachers are concerned, a new and broad vista has been opened regarding the parental home, and I can now better appreciate the social, economic and welfare problems of the neighborhood in which I work. In the course of my work I came to realize that there exists in the heart of the parents a great desire to find ways of bringing up and educating their children. I am now closer to them than ever before. They realized that I was listening to them patiently and that I wanted sincerely to hear what they had to say. The discussion went on much longer than planned, whether it was beside the exit from the kindergarten or in the street, where the parents remained a good while longer discussing all kinds of problems that had been mentioned. It happens also that they talk about them with their neighbours. Social ties grow stronger, and a new common interest has been created. A great deal of human wisdom can be gained from the parents, who acquired it through the experience of their everyday existence. The "Kedmah" research enabled the parents to express themselves in a personal manner, and this is a great thing."

"The parents are now prepared to be frank and confiding with one another, and this is the most desirable way of working."

"The very fact that they are listened to, raised their self-esteem... it seems to me that they also look at their children in a new way...Next year, even without the research, I shall go on working this way with the parents."

"The parents simply derive pleasure from the meetings, and so do I. I am suddenly aware of things about them that I never dreamed I would know. Thus I came to know them and they me."

2. Analysis of the Answers Given by the Kindergarten Teachers Taking Part in the Research Experiment and of the Control Group to the Survey of the "Involvement of the Parents in the Educational Work"

In order to validate the answers of the teachers taking part in the experiment as they were given in the initial and final questionnaires, we

used the system of comparison between the experimental group and the control group. For the control group, thirteen kindergarten teachers, who worked among a population similar to that of the project, who worked with children of comparable age, and who had the same seniority in their work, were selected. We carried out a comparison between pairs of teachers, one teacher from the experimental group with one from the control group. When the discussion groups had ended, an identical questionnaire was submitted to the teachers in the experimental and those in the control groups.

In the questionnaire, we tried to ascertain the following points:

a. Had a change taken place in the attitude of the teachers taking part in the experiment to the tried, tested and traditional ways of working with the parents, ways which are essentially one-way methods in which the kindergarten teacher or the expert lectures to the parents?

b. Had a change taken place in the teachers' evaluation of the contribution to education made by the parents in reference to the kindergarten teaching program?

All the teachers gave their answers in writing. The analysis is based, therefore, on the declared positions of the kindergarten teachers and not on their actual behaviour, which was not observed due to the limitations of the project.

Without reference to any analysis, one striking behavioural finding emerges. Ten of the teachers expressed the wish to continue with the discussion group method with the parents in 1973 without being paid for it, (additional funds for the project were unavailable). This phenomenon testifies to the positive evaluation of the new method on the part of the kindergarten teachers. Six teachers even noted that parents had come to ask them to continue with the discussion groups. These were generally parents who had not participated in the discussion groups, since their children were not yet attending kindergarten, but who had heard about them from parents whose children had already left the kindergarten. The teachers confirmed the importance of the cooperative work both for themselves and for the parents.

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A. Analysis of the Questionnaire Submitted to the Kindergarten Teachers Involved in the Experiment and to the Teachers of the Control Group.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

1. The attitude of the kindergarten teachers to the method of cooperation with parents in the educational work.
2. The contribution of the parents to the teachers' knowledge of the children.
3. The contribution of the parents to the enrichment of the teaching program.

Four alternative answers were given for each question. They were evaluated quantitatively as follows:

very important	- 4
important	- 3
less important	- 2
unimportant	- 1

The analysis of the findings was undertaken in accordance with the sections of the questionnaire, each separate section being described, analyzed, and summarized in conformity with the declared answers of the teachers in the experimental and of the teachers in the control groups.

Section One - The Attitude of the Kindergarten Teachers to the Involvement of the Parents in the Educational Work

In this section, four questions were used to investigate the teachers' attitude to teaching the parents. The difference between the answers of the teachers in the experimental and in the control group is striking.

Experimental Teachers	Control Group
Preference for discussion group, dialogue, exchange of views between parents and teachers.	Preference for lectures, experts and educators in all fields.
Tendency to listen and learn.	Tendency to teach, to speak.

It is interesting to note that where the medical profession and the subject of medicine were concerned, the experimental teachers also supported lectures by doctors, perhaps because of the great professional authority and the high standing of the medical profession. The kindergarten teacher does

00045

not feel herself qualified to conduct a professional discussion on medical problems.

The control group teachers also pointed out the importance of meeting with the parents. However, when the kindergarten teachers taking part in the experiment and those in the control group came to evaluate the discussion group as a method of involving the parents in the educational work in the kindergarten, a very significant difference was discerned (4.0 as against 3.0).

Conclusion: The kindergarten teachers taking part in the experiment appreciated and enjoyed their discussions with the parents and came to regard them as people of worth whose opinions were of value and whose attitudes should be taken note of, while the teachers of the control group, who had not worked in this manner, judged it to be one of the methods to be tried in the future (see Table 2). It may be supposed that if the teachers who appreciate the involvement of parents in the life of the educational institution were to experience it in the form of discussion on an equal footing, they also would enjoy this new system.

Graph 1 - Comparison between Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers of Experimental Group and Control Group, reg. Teaching the Parents.

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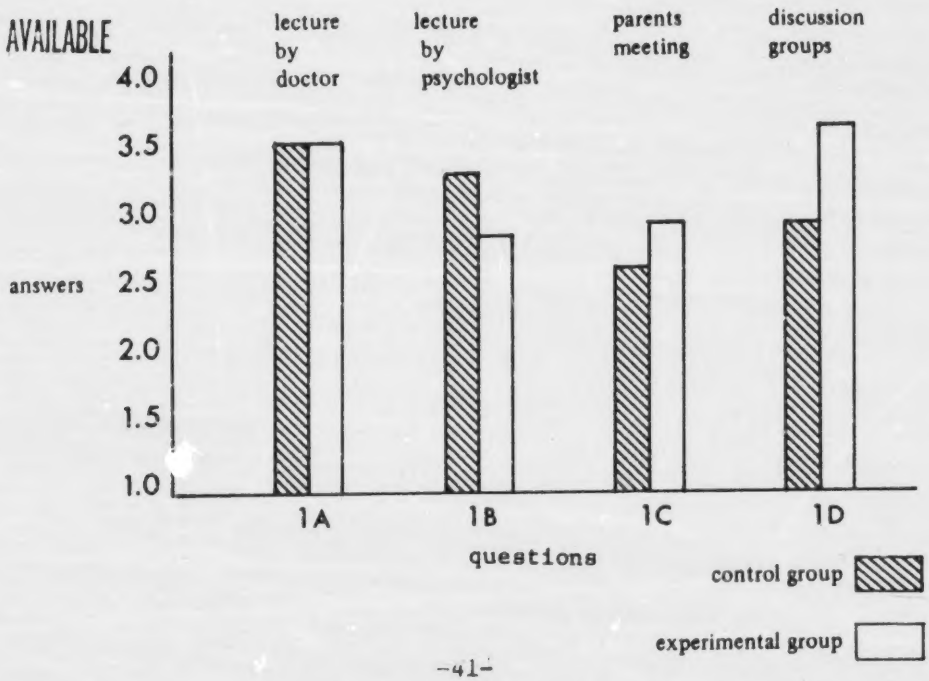

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Section Two - Evaluation of the Kindergarten Teachers of the Experiment and the Control Group Regarding the Contribution of the Parents to their Knowledge of the Child

Significant differences began to manifest themselves when the two groups were asked to evaluate the contribution made by the parents to the teachers' knowledge of the child's social development (contribution of the parents to social development was rated at 3.6 as against 3.1). It may be assumed that the discussion groups furnished the teachers with an added tool for understanding the social behaviourof the child in the kindergarten. Discussions on such topics as "What is a good child?" and "How can one teach kindness" broadened the horizons of the kindergarten teachers by making them aware of a wide and varied spectrum of possible forms of social behaviour, as reflected in the discussions with mothers from different cultural backgrounds and from different social levels.

The last question in this section dealt with the contribution made by the parents to the knowledge of the kindergarten teacher of the child's intellectual development. Here there is a striking difference between the answers of the control group teachers and those of the teachers in the experimental group, (3.4 as against 3.0). This difference also stems from the joint discussions with the parents. Discussions on teaching the child the concepts of colour, number, or family revealed to the teachers that the parents do in fact teach the children,although in ways other than those used by the teachers. This discovery contributed to the teachers' positive attitude to the contribution made by the parents to their, the teachers', knowledge of the intellectual development of the child, his associative capacity and his mode of thinking.

Graph number 2 demonstrates the difference between the attitudes of the experimental teachers and those of the control group.

In this section the questions are designed to study the attitude of the kindergarten teacher to the contribution made by the parents to her knowledge of the child as an individual. The experimental teachers exhibited a more positive attitude towards the contribution of the parents in all four areas. These findings should be related to the discussion groups in which the teachers discovered the parents to be a source of significant information leading to a more profound knowledge of the child.

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The first question, as presented in the first part of the questionnaire, was also a comprehensive question in which the kindergarten teachers of both groups expressed a positive attitude towards the contribution of the parents to the knowledge of the personality of the child. The differences between their answers were small, fulfilling our expectation that the teachers would give similar answers to this question (3.88 as against 3.55). Thus, both the groups expressed appreciation of the contribution made by the parents to their knowledge about the exceptional child (3.88 against 3.77). The agreement of the two groups is explained by their training which is inclined to attach importance to the part played by the parents in the teachers' knowledge about the child from an emotional point of view.

As to the question of whether the parents contribute to the cultural background of the child, we also anticipated general agreement. Nonetheless, a slight difference was discerned between the answers of the experimental teachers and those of the control group (3.88 as against 3.66).

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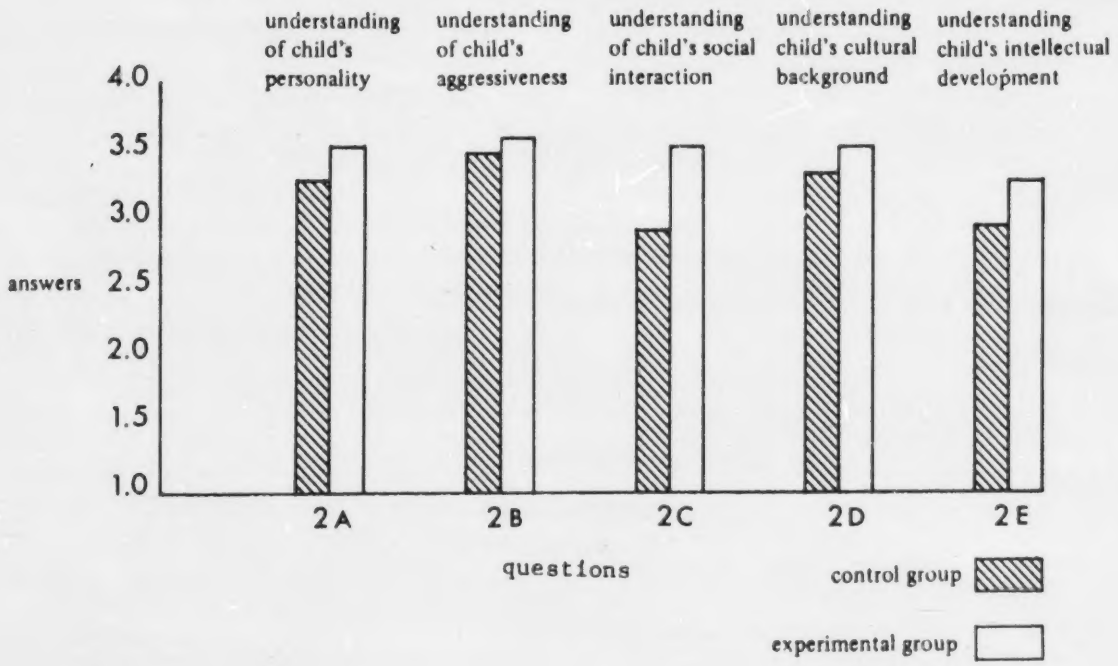
Graph 2 - Comparison between Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers of Experimental Group and Control Group, reg. Parents' Contribution to Understanding of Child's Needs



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Section Three - The Evaluation by the Kindergarten Teachers of the Contribution of the Parents to the Educational Realm of the Kindergarten

The attitudes of the teachers towards the contribution made by the parents to their educational work concentrate on two aspects:

1. The contribution which is usual in most kindergartens in Israel and which finds expression in a technical contribution to the enlargement of the stock equipment of the kindergarten.

2. The new approach, which sees the parents as potential contributors to the educational realm of the kindergarten in terms of subject-matter and pedagogy.

In their answers the experimental teachers attached importance to the new approach, whereas the teachers of the control group attached importance to the technical contribution of the parents to the kindergarten.

The first question dealt with the contribution of the parents to the kindergarten's organization in conformity with the cultural background of its population. Such organization, though fundamentally technical, also reveals the attitude of the teacher towards different cultures, for example: the arrangement of the doll corner may be in accordance with the life-style of an Ashkenazi family or with that of a family from the Oriental communities, and different doll costumes reflect the differences in the typical dress of the various communities. Books should be included which reveal to the children different ways of life, and the cooking corner should reflect different cuisines, those customarily found among Jews from the Oriental countries as well as those customary among Jews from the Western communities.

Consequently, although the word "organization" invites a technical interpretation, the expression "in accordance with the cultural background" invites an interpretation of content. There was a marked difference between the two groups (2.8 as against 2.0).

If we compare the two sections of the questionnaire, we become aware of the differences between declared answers and actual behaviour. The teachers in the control group gave a positive evaluation of the contribution made by

00049

the parents to their understanding of the cultural background of the child, but this was not given the test of practical application. The teachers in the experimental group, on the other hand, especially those who had conducted discussion groups with disadvantaged parents, showed greater willingness to put into practice what they had learned from the parents. This practical approach found expression too in the teachers' answers to question 3b in the questionnaire. This question dealt with the contribution made by the parents to the choice of story by the kindergarten teacher. Here a considerable difference was noted between the answers of the experimental teachers and those of the control group teachers (3.2 as against 2.25). The teachers taking part in the experiment, who had heard many stories concerning the life and the traditions of the Oriental communities, showed greater willingness (also conspicuous from a comparison between the first survey and the second survey) to make use of the stories of the Oriental communities in their choice of stories to tell in the course of the year. The story, as it is told in the child's home, acquired great significance in the life of the kindergarten.

A difference was remarked in the answers given to question 3c, which deals with the parents' contribution to the organization of festival celebrations in the kindergarten and their active participation in them, between the teachers in the control group and those in the experimental group (3.2 as against 1.8). The experimental teachers appreciate the cooperation of the parents in festivities and the cultural contribution of the parents to the content and form of the festivity, whereas the teachers of the control group attached practically no importance to this. It may be assumed that the control group teachers have in mind the type of kindergarten festivity which is habitual in most of Israel's kindergartens, those which have a Western content and form.

The discussion groups revolved around the culture and values of the parents. The experimental teachers did in fact learn from the parents, displayed greater flexibility and expressed the desire to include varied cultural content in the kindergarten festivities.

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The difference between the experimental teachers and those of the control group is also striking in their answers to question 3d, which deals with the attitude of the teacher to the contribution made by the parents to the teaching program in the kindergarten. The experimental teachers are prepared to include in the teaching program material and methods about which they learned in the discussion groups, whereas the control group teachers, who attached only minor importance to the contribution of the parents to the teaching program, do not consider it necessary to incorporate material from the parental home into the teaching program in the kindergarten (3.5 as against 2.57). This finding also reflects one of the findings of Dr. Feitelson[1] in a survey she carried out on the participation of the parents in the life of the school. When she examined the attitude of teachers of Grade 5 who teach the geography of the Middle East, she found an absence of interest on the part of the teachers towards the contribution made by the parents, as a source of information and as a factor in enriching the program in geography, and in imparting to the children concepts of the geography of the region from which they came.

In summary, the experimental teachers are prepared to make the teaching program more flexible out of regard for the population of the neighbourhood where they work. The teachers of the control group, on the other hand, attach very little importance to the contribution made by the parents to the teaching program.

Question 3e was put in an unclear fashion and its interpretation by the kindergarten teachers was wide off the mark. The question was: "Can the mother take the place of the kindergarten teacher?". In their answers, the teachers of both groups thought in terms of technical replacement, and so they answered affirmatively. The question was actually concerned with content. The unclear formulation caused its invalidation.

The next two questions dealt with the parents' technical aid to the kindergarten: laying the table, cloth embroidery, sewing of aprons and adding to the kindergarten's equipment. Here the control group ascribed great importance to the parents' contribution. The experimental group evaluated this contribution as secondary only (3f - 2.12 control group as

1 Dr. Dina Feitelson, "The School and the Parents". The Ministry of Education and Culture, Pedagogical Secretariat, Jerusalem (1968)

against 1.75 for the experimental group; 3g - 2.12 the control group, 1.88 experimental group).

The final question, 3h, returns to the problem of parental contribution to the teaching program, with the emphasis placed on their aid in the development of mathematical concepts in the kindergarten. Once again, there is a noticeable gap between the answers of the experimental teachers and those of the teachers of the control group (3.25 as against 2.0).

In summary, this section, dealing with the contribution made by the parents to the teaching program in the kindergarten, revealed the positive attitude of the teachers in the experiment towards the pedagogical contribution of the parents to the life of the kindergarten and the positive attitude of the teachers in the control group towards the technical contribution made by the parents to the educational institution.

Table 2:

Part Three, Findings

Answers Questions on the Parents' Contribution	Average Experimental Group	 Control Group
Organization of the kindergarten according to cultural background	2.8	2.0
Choice of story	3.2	2.25
Organizing festivities	3.2	1.875
Content in teaching programs	3.5	2.57
Laying of table	1.75	2.125
Embroidery of cloths and aprons	1.88	2.125
Concepts in mathematics	3.25	2.0

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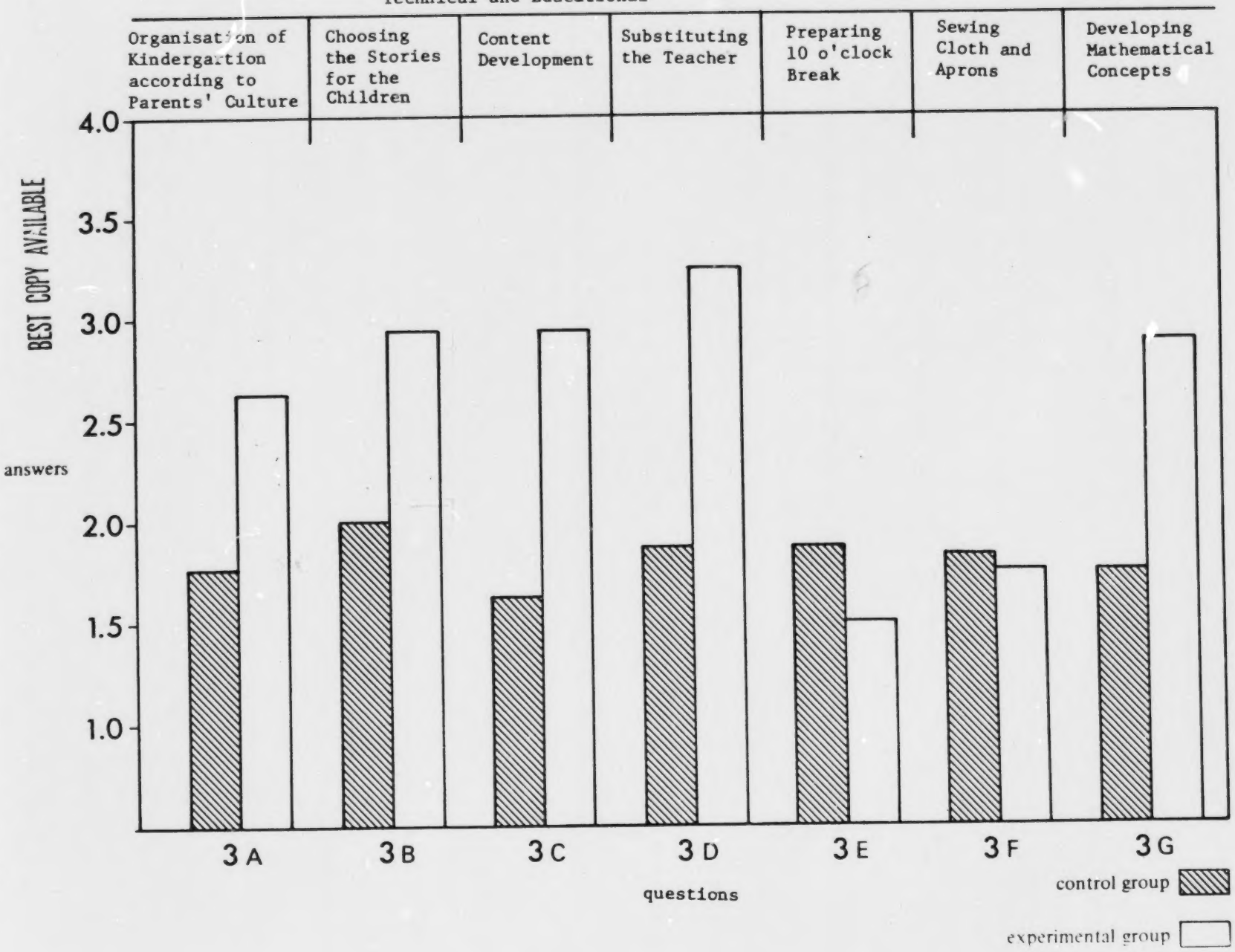
Graph 3 - Comparison between Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers Experimental Group and Control Group, reg. Parents' Contribution - Technical and Educational



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Summary

A comparative summary of all the sections of the questionnaire reinforces the hypothesis that due to the influence of the discussion groups, the kindergarten teachers who took part in the experiment esteem the parents as a source of valuable enrichment for the teaching program and educational work with the children.

1. The teachers of the experimental group value more highly than the teachers of the control group the concept of mutual discussion as a significant way of involving the parents in the life of the educational institution.

2. The teachers of the experimental group value more highly than do the teachers of the control group the contribution made by the parents to their understanding of the child from the spiritual, social, intellectual, and cultural points of view.

3. The teachers of the experimental group value more highly than do the teachers of the control group the contribution made by the parents to the teaching program as a qualitative and pedagogical contribution and not simply as a technical one.

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IV. PARENTS ON "KEDMAH"

A quantitative analysis of the findings in Stage One concentrated, as we have said, on the influence of the discussion groups as a new type of encounter between parents and kindergarten teachers. At the same time, we could not help but receive feed-back from the parents; consequently, we set out to interview a representative sample of parents and we recorded their reactions.

One of the mothers presented Saul Tchernikovski's poem, "Man is but...", in order to express her feelings following "Kedmah".

MAN IS BUT.....

Man is but the earth of a small land,
Man is but the mould of the panorama of his homeland,
But what his ear has absorbed when still fresh,
But what his eye has taken in when not yet weary to look.
All that he encountered on the precipitous paths of troubled childhood...
And only in wealth of days and existence war,
Is the scroll of his life's tale explained,
And one by one they come, and he each sign and symbol
Can interpret as they come,
All those that were inscribed thereon
When first the covenant was sealed -
Man is but the image of the panorama of his homeland.

1. Reactions of the Parents (representative sample) to the discussion groups

Each of the kindergarten teachers taking part in the experiment was asked to select five mothers (or fathers) from among the parents participating in the discussion groups according to one criterion only: constant and consistent participation in the discussion groups. A total of fifty parents were selected. These parents were interviewed in an open interview in which they were asked to express their opinion on the project and their feelings during the meetings of the discussion groups.

The questions were: What did Kedmah do for you in particular? What is your feeling towards the rest of the mothers who participated in the discussion? and Give an example of something special that you learned from the research.

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Below we give a number of reactions in the original language of the respondents' questions.

Mother (Tunis): I had a good feeling. First of all, it turned the mothers into a unit, and it is good that someone listened to the mothers also, for they are in some way a factor in education. From a personal point of view, I liked to listen to other mothers. I gained a number of things from them. I saw that they also have struggles and experiences similar to mine.

Mother (Morocco): It was pleasant to be together, and it is a shame that it has finished. I would be very happy if it could continue, whether for the sake of research or for its own sake.

Mother (Rumania): It was very interesting for me for many reasons. First, I am a new immigrant in Israel and I had an opportunity to meet people who have already been living here for a number of years and to know their ideas. I also had an opportunity to be closer to the kindergarten and to know the teacher.

Mother (Morocco): It was interesting to go out of the house and to spend time with the parents of the other children and with the kindergarten teacher.

Mother (Tunis): In bringing up the child, it is very good that the mother is asked. I am amazed that they didn't do this before. It created a spiritual bond among the mothers. It was pleasant to meet each other and we also became friends with the kindergarten teachers.

Mother (Born in Israel): It was really a pleasure to come. I thought that only I shout at my little girl, and I saw that the other mothers also do so. It's a shame that it has finished.

Mother (Tunis): I had not imagined that a story could be of such interest to a child; during the project it emerged that it is very desirable to tell children stories. I saw with my own eyes that this matter of stories made the children better disciplined and happier in my company, and it really changed our ways at home. We became better friends with the children,

as they are really crazy about stories. This is one of the most important things I discovered during the research.

Mother (Morocco): The research led to unity. It was especially pleasant for me to recall my distant memories of my own parents' home.

Mother (Tunis): The research project made the mother into a thinking person also, someone who can understand, who can look for a better method.

Mother (Israeli Born): I feel that the research helped me to progress a lot; I now know more things.

Mother (Morocco): I liked to hear how it was with other mothers. Was I the only one wrong, or was I the only one right? What did they think by comparison? I gained something from mothers who also have their work cut out. It helps, for if a person thinks that only he has the problem and that it is no problem for the other person, he begins to feel guilty. It is very good, and if we also succeeded in contributing something, that is also very good.

Mother (Egypt): I think that it was successful. It helped us a great deal. At first we spoke about the festivals, afterwards about things that we do at home. They listened to me, I listened to them. I heard things that were very important for me. We talked about the festivals as we celebrated them abroad. Here everything is different; here, we are distant from the family and cannot celebrate the festivals together. I learned especially to listen, I learned how to behave if a child steals. Till now the project has not had much influence, but it will in the future. This is what is important. In the future there will be changes. I was never absent. It was very interesting for me. There were things that I didn't know, and I learned.

Mother (Israeli born): I have no particular impressions. It was simply good, good to know how everyone speaks, to know what it is good to do for the child at home. I was curious to know what took place in the kindergarten, and so I came, and it was worthwhile.

Here is one example to show how I have changed. We had a conversation, we parents, about the lighting of candles on the Sabbath. I heard that it was good to light candles, so I came home and began to light them. My little girl sang. It was lovely. Now I light candles every Sabbath. My little girl doesn't ask why I smoke on the Sabbath and put on the electricity. She knows it is the Sabbath because of the candles.

Mother (England): The discussions were generally interesting, although there were mothers who were tedious. It is hard to listen to discussions, but I really like to listen to stories and opinions. I learned how to educate and raise the children, the other parents taught me.

Mother (Iraq): It was interesting to ask questions and to give answers. Sometimes I wanted to answer, but the others always got in before me. Before, we were only neighbours of the other mothers. Now it is something different. The best part was getting out of the house.

Mother (Israeli born): It was a very pleasant social encounter. It gave me the opportunity to meet the parents of the children with whom my son goes to school.

I learned things that I hadn't come across before. For example, I learned that the child has to know colours, height, weight, time. All the mothers learned and then I also began. I had had other children, but with this one I do things differently. We are more sensitive now; we know more now.

Something else happened. Previously, I had ideas about people - this one is like this, and that one is like that. I didn't know them, except from seeing them in the neighbourhood. Now, after the discussion, they appear to me completely different. I have changed my ideas about them, and this is good. I would like to continue with the discussions, I have a goal. I feel that I was important to

00058

the discussions.

Mother (Persia): It taught me to teach my child. In the discussion groups, I learned how to help my child to be a good friend, how to make friends. I never thought that I could help him so much.

Mother (Iraq): You always learn - the sages say that the longer you live, the more you learn. It was lovely to learn from others. My older children were quieter, and the little one is more active. I have to know how to deal with each one separately. The analysis of the problems was very important.

Father (North Africa): The research didn't do anything for me. I don't yet give anything to my children, but it is important for the future. Everything is important for the future. I was amazed by some things. For example, I learned that the bottles of detergents should be kept separate. With us they are kept in the same place as the bottles of drink. I contributed to the group. They asked me to come, and I came. My son saw that I went to the kindergarten, and that gave him the strength and importance, and it changed him a lot. I don't want this to be only a research project. It ought to continue like this even without research. It's good for the child, for the parents, and for the kindergarten teacher. Parents and children should also meet together. It would be very interesting.

I didn't find the discussions on Jewish tradition interesting.

Mother (Iraq): I began to go out of sheer curiosity. I was afraid that I might miss something. I didn't learn anything special, but I taught them; when I talked, I felt that everybody wanted to learn from me.

I don't want to miss anything that can be good for my child. I am a modern mother; I wasn't like this as a young girl.

Mother (Egypt): The discussions gave reassurance to both mother and child, and anything that I liked I at once put into effect at home. And it is good to listen to others. The ones who didn't come, didn't come because they couldn't spare the time.

00059

Mother (Syria): I was very impressed by the other parents. I listened to the others, and then at night I thought about what they had said. Now if something happens with the child, I have changed my behaviour. Now I correct his behaviour in complete cooperation with him. In our neighbourhood live people from diverse communities, Iraqis and others, and they all act differently. If they have something good, I learn; if bad, I don't learn it.

Mother (Israeli born): I learned and I also taught. I very much enjoyed the company of all the other mothers, and it is only a pity that there were too many groups and they were too small in size. It would have been better had there been fewer groups and more people in each one. I was very impressed. I came back to my children with new vigour.

Mother (Yemen): It was very good that they asked us questions. I know how to bring up children, and if I know something important I teach others.

I didn't find many friends in the groups. My husband wants me to be at home and cook in the evenings. It was good for me to go out of the house once a fortnight in the evening.

Father (Yemen): I very much enjoyed the discussion groups. They should continue. It was good to listen and to speak. It teaches you how to help the children get on. I didn't learn from the others; I just told everything I knew and all the stories that I heard when I was a young lad, 32 years ago. I told them in Arabic. The stories were stories of the past, and a lot can be learned from them. They were interesting, those meetings. I wish to say thank you to the Ministry of Education for those discussion groups.

Mother (Yemen): I learned a great deal. I learned the morals of the stories. It was very pleasant to meet other mothers, to meet other people. I left my home and came into a new atmosphere.

I also learned that it isn't good to be bad-tempered and nervous with the children, and I learned from the other parents that patience is necessary.

00060

Mother (North Africa): The stories that our Yemenite told were delightful. I am not religious, but his stories have made it important for me to observe the Jewish tradition. I don't want the tradition to vanish. It is good to celebrate the festivals and the Sabbath; it is worth making the effort to preserve the tradition.

We are newcomers here, and the other mothers gave me a very nice welcome, although we are not friends. However, we have made good contacts.

Mother (Iraq): The meetings were very interesting because every time there was something new, each mother had a different opinion because our backgrounds were different. It was very interesting. And it was interesting to hear the stories of each different community. We learned from them all; a person learns his whole life long.

Mother (North Africa): In particular, I learned about the customs of the communities. I don't like telling stories to the children; I don't believe in it. But it was very nice to listen to them.

Mother (Rumania): It was very interesting to see how the Jews were persecuted everywhere; Syria, North Africa, Russia and Rumania. I felt that all the mothers from different communities belonged to one Jewish nation.

Mother (England): At first we were very enthusiastic, but later on it wasn't interesting. The novelty wore off. I came because of the kindergarten teacher. All those women brought their own personal problems and didn't touch on the topic. I liked the difference in life-styles, and if I knew Hebrew perhaps I would have enjoyed it better. It was too religious. It was an interesting experiment, but it could have been more enjoyable.

Mother (Israeli born): I came to learn. It was good that the teacher didn't speak at all. It was pleasant to come. There were young mothers, and it was interesting to hear their views. I

didn't come looking for an opinion. It's like a suspense film; you don't learn much, but it's interesting. It's a pity that I didn't join the Morasha discussion group (that in a poor neighbourhood adjacent to the Rassco neighbourhood). I heard that there was a Yemenite Jew there who told wonderful tales about Jerusalem and Safad. I would like it to have continued.

The discussions were full of nostalgia and reminiscences. They listened to you, and you listened to them. It was good to converse, to analyse problems, and to feel at ease; the atmosphere was pleasant, and so were the conversations.

Mother (Israeli born): The research was very useful. People think that we, the middle-class, don't have any problems of our own. We also have problems, and it is good to resolve them jointly. What was particularly interesting to me was listening to how a mother with many children brings them up. I saw how much she is prepared to sacrifice for her children. I only wish that I could do the same.

Mother (Israeli born): We parents became friends. That is the most important thing. I learned about the kindergarten. It was interesting to listen to the stories of the other parents and to exchange opinions. I should like to continue with the method of cooperation between the parents and the kindergarten teachers, although the meetings should not be so frequent.

It is a pity that this system is not also adopted in schools. Thanks to "Kedmah", I not only got to know my son's friends but their parents as well.

A mother from Tunis, who is a writer, gave a written account of her impressions of the research:

The "Kedmah" project is a positive endeavour which was able to obtain clear information from reliable sources and to receive better information about the children from no less a source than the mother who spends the best part of her life in the shadow of that same child, who guides him and at times even struggles with him from the cradle until his entry into the wide

world. As the saying goes: "Ask the experienced person and not the doctor". The Kedmah research has thrown light on the position of the mother and to some extent has helped to liberate her from the heavy onus she has had to bear. It has transformed her from a passive figure, whose main role is to see the child to the kindergarten, into an active element in the search to find a better system of education. In particular, it has helped to ease the daily struggle that she has to wage with her dear son or daughter in the sphere of education. Moreover, the mothers gathered around the tape-recorder and were ready cooperate, to try out different educational methods, to jointly seek guidance, to reveal their own "recipes". This was the most beneficial aspect of all.

Above all, this experiment enabled the mothers to leave their apartments, abandon their traditional silence, and find a receptive ear to their problems. The result of this research was the creation of a friendly atmosphere between the teachers and the mothers and among the mothers themselves, and the detente was spontaneous. Happy and smiling mothers derived great pleasure from their childhood memories, sayings, popular tales and legends.

It was a pleasure to be absorbed in the impression-laden atmosphere of life in the country of origin, to describe with great embellishment that traditional wedding or Bar-Mitzva ceremony in one land or another, to pluck from the near or distant past poetic and sympathetic figures and images.

For me, the "Kedmah" Project was like Elija the Prophet.

From an enthusiastic mother .

Madeleine Duek

Summing up 2

The above representative sample of parents' reactions reflects a broad cross-section of the Jewish population of Israel in 1971. It is a community cross-section, as well as an economic and social one and it includes a wide spectrum of views, positions, and attitudes towards educating and bringing up children and towards the idea of family life, as well as interest in the cultures of the communities from which the parents, their neighbours and their friends came.

00063

The interviews were personal, as were the reactions, but we can here summarize a few of the general features that emerged at this stage of the findings:

A. Greater Interest in the Customs of Different Communities

The parents' observations reflected interest in, and enjoyment of, the stories of the various cultures. As a result of the meeting of members of diverse communities, there was a decrease in the strength of the pre-conceived notions they had entertained about each other previously. Mothers from the Oriental communities who, before the start of the discussion groups, had referred to those from other Oriental communities than their own as being inferior, "dirty", and "primitive", changed their views following the meetings.

B. The Discovery of Common Features in the Problems of Bringing up Children

The mothers by their remarks gave us to understand that they derived great satisfaction from the feeling of being able to iron out problems together with others and from the assistance each one offered to the others. Many mothers who, at the start of the discussions, evinced feelings of guilt over their attitude to their children imagined that only they "got angry" with their children and "shouted" at them and "clouted" them. They came to realize in the course of the discussions that other mothers also acted as they did. The joint analysis of the good and bad aspects of their behaviour towards their children constituted for them an educational experience of major importance.

C. Enjoyment of the "Social Get-Together" in the Discussion Groups

For a considerable number of the parents involved, the discussion groups represented a pleasant social get-together, an opportunity to get out of the house, to voice their own opinions, and to hear those of others. A number of mothers remarked that the meetings were too frequent and that this made things difficult for them. It would have been more convenient for them had the meetings been once a month rather than fortnightly.

The relaxed and informal atmosphere, the light refreshments, and undemanding exchange of views, all these contributed to the feeling that the participants were persons of worth, helping to create a warm and sincere atmosphere. In some of the kindergartens ties of lasting friendship were formed by the mothers, and new immigrants declared that the research project made the task of integration easier for them.

00064

D. A Warmer and More Sincere Attitude Towards the Teacher

The transformation of the kindergarten teacher into a listener, a learner, sincerely interested in the attitudes of the mothers and their cultural and communal background raised the prestige of the teacher in the eyes of the parents, and the respectful attitude of the teacher towards the parents further contributed to their feelings that they were beginnning to constitute a significant factor in the educational process. This atmosphere of mutual respect created a sense of partnership between the parents and the teacher.

E. The Mothers Learned and Taught in the Discussion Groups

In spite of a number of spontaneous answers of "I didn't learn" to the question "What did you learn in the discussion groups?", in fact, in the later part of the interview, the same mothers who had thus answered revealed how great was the benefit they had gained from the discussion groups. For example, a mother who at first stated that she had learned nothing, goes on to say "I heard that it is good to light candles on Sabbath, and I began to light them"; or "I have begun to behave towards my little boy, who now goes to kindergarten, in a completely different manner from that which I used to towards my two older children"; or "I have learned that it is forbidden to put b l e a c h next to the cognac"; and so forth.

Many mothers pointed out that they had taught others more than they had learned themselves. This attitude indicates the development that took place in their feeling of self-esteem and in their desire to assist others.

Several other phenomena that emerged following the discussion groups deserve to be noted. "Silent" mothers began to speak, lonely mothers felt among friends and made friends, and many mothers changed their educational methods; for example, many turned the authentic communal tale into a means of education.

Two mothers only (both from England) were of the opinion that it was boring and that the discussions at times deviated from the topic that should have been debated. They also noted overlapping between various topics.

The mothers' reactions strengthened the hypothesis that the discussion groups fulfilled a socio-educational function of the greatest significance.

The almost identical evaluations by mothers of such diverse origins (Morocco, Yemen, Turkey, Rumania, England, and Israel), both "Veterans" and "New Immigrants", indicate that this method of cooperation between the home and the educational institution creates understanding, affection, self-esteem, and mutual contributions by those concerned with educating and bringing up the young child.

00066

V. THE PERSONAL ASPECTS OF "KEDMAH"

A large number of surprising personal revelations came to light in the course of this research. We shall give some of them here, both because they corroborate the assumptions of the project, and because we consider the events and discussions to be valuable and moving.

1. Madeleine

The most dramatic instance was that of a mother of five who was considered peculiar, almost insane, in her neighbourhood. From the very start of the discussions the rumor circulated that Madeleine was an unusual woman, and that it was a "pleasure" to listen to her views. Many turned to her for advice and guidance. The woman began to blossom. She was so enthusiastic about the discussions and about the very fact that she exercised such an attraction for people that when it happened that she was unable to attend, she would commit her ideas, views, and childhood memories to paper. The teacher in charge sensed that this was an exceptional case. She showed me the "writing". Through the initiative of a friend with connections in the Cultural Division of the Vaad-Hapoel, Madeleine's writings were submitted to a writer of note, who suggested to Madeleine that she write a book and even made it clear to her that if the book were written with skill, it would be eligible for the prize of the Ben-Zvi Institute. Since then, Madeleine has been interviewed on the radio, and been written about in various newspapers.

We here reproduce some of her words and some stories that reflect her exceptional descriptive capacity. The following passages are given word for word:

> "What happened to me? How did I escape from my loneliness and depression?"- this will be the motif of her book.
>
> "In our home there in Tunis there prevailed a very poetic atmosphere that overcame poverty and almost erased its cruel traces. We drank stories. We were steeped in tales of the wonderful miracles of Elija the Prophet and the Great Ones of the Tora, as well as of the local Rabbis who had shown their mettle. The concept of "Divine Justice" (Hatzedek Haelyon) would reappear in every story or legend.....

00067

In the ghetto of Tunis there reigned a very special atmosphere. There were extremely original characters who were part and parcel of ghetto-life and existence."

Original Characters in the Ghetto of Tunis (from the stories told by Madeleine)

The Fortune Teller

A beautiful girl of about 17, half street-walker and half fortune teller, and a young person much in demand, passes through the ghetto-streets crying out, "Fortune teller, fortune teller". And then all the women leave their work and run to her. They gather at the entrance of one of the houses, seated in the Oriental manner, and wait with bated breath for the fateful words that the fortune teller would "declaim" to them.

I, personally, knew a number of women who did not have the money to buy a loaf of bread for their children, but who could always fork out the sum required in order to hear their fate and the "perspectives" opened upon the horizon with regard to their near or distant future.

This same "fortune teller" always used a certain "slang" which she declaimed almost "automatically", with slight alterations according to which woman she was dealing with.... She made her forecasts conform to the "dreams" of every woman concerning the brilliant future she ardently yearned for which would extricate her and her loved ones from the hopeless blind-alley of their present existence, the great poverty, harsh social conditions, lack of understanding between husband and wife, and so forth....

As a young girl of 7 I was quite captivated by the"fortune teller". I considered her as possessing all the necessary qualities and attributes, beautiful (her eyes were warm, dark and sparkling), adorned with an abundance of jewellery, attired in very folkloristic dress, and above all, wonderfully "wise".

The Milk Merchant

> Do you picture to yourselves the "milk salesman" in our neighbourhood as just an ordinary milkman who bears a container full of milk and other containers, or surrounded by crates full of bottles? If so, my friend, then you err.
>
> Our milk merchant would rise at the crack of dawn or earlier in order to get to our neighbourhood. He always appeared surrounded by a multi-hued flock of goats that would scatter to all corners of the alley whenever a woman approached him to buy milk. Then he would dive in among the goats, seize one of them, whose udders were the fullest, in his own way, bring it to the "alter", and then-oh, then he would squeeze and squeeze the udders and then white, creamy liquid would spill into, and fill, the one and only little can.
>
> After he had received his few [illegible] - the price of the milk - he would race to all the corners of the alley gathering his flock, move on to another alley, and begin all over again."

2. As a rule, fathers stay away from the kindergarten and leave the education of the young child in the hands of the mother. This was not so in the discussion groups, which attracted the fathers as well as the mothers. In one of the kindergartens located in a poor neighbourhood, where most of the parents of the children are themselves children of immigrants who arrived in the fifties, there was a "Panther" father who always spoke "against". He accused the establishment, the public services, and so on. In the ninth discussion, at the end of the project, one of the Israeli born mothers said to him, "You know, you are talking differently, you have become much more of an optimist, haven't you? You don't shout at all the world any more, do you?"

The father answered, "I don't know. Could be that you are right. When you speak from the heart, you forget to be angry"....

3. The discussions reflected the level of involvement of the parents associated with all the kindergartens and from all the social levels and communities, in the education of their children.

00069

One of the most interesting discussions dealt with the place of the child in his family and his attitude towards the members of the family. Ten parents were present, seven mothers from the Oriental communities and three from the Western communities.

The discussion reflected the struggles of today's parents regarding the authority of the father, the grandmother, and the grandfather. A clear distinction exists between the attitudes of the mothers from the Oriental communities and the attitudes of the mothers from Western communities.

The Kindergarten Teacher: First Question: How do you explain to your child his place in the family?

Sara: I think that the child knows his place in the family from a very early age. My little girl is alone among three brothers and from an early age she demanded her rights. She laid down the law in the house and taught us her laws. When the fourth child was born she thought that she was my maid. Her place in the family? She is a little girl, young, and the relationship between her and her little brother is excellent. I think that such things do not have to be explained. Children see and know what their place is in the family. The oldest boy knows he has the responsibility.

Ruthy: I think that it depends on differences of age. If there is a gap of five to six years between the children it is very different from a gap of two to three years. If the gap is small, there are no differences.

Pnina: When my husband comes home, it is quiet. They are afraid of father. They have to be afraid of something.

Rika: In our house, the father is accustomed to being accorded a little more respect, and the father has the last word. This is how we saw it, and this is how I would like it to continue. It is good. At mealtime, for example, no one starts until father has started, and this is a good thing in my opinion. And if one of the children starts to eat first, the second one warns him and says, "Wait till father comes."

00070

Pnina: Even when I am not right, my husband doesn't side with the children.

Sara: In our home, my husband and I are equals. I grew up in a home where the father was like a king and I realized that it wasn't good, for when all is said and done he is only a human being like us, and when we reached the age of 12-13 we began to think but could not say anything against father's ideas. It was terrible. Afterwards, the whole family life was shattered. We each went our separate ways. Therefore, in our house we do not want to be friends. Neither friends nor parents can do what they want. But if I am with the children and they do not behave themselves, I give a punishment, but I do not say "When he gets home, he will smack you." I hope that in a few years time, when the children are bigger, they will tell us their ideas and thoughts. If we succeed in this, we shall have succeeded in teaching the children their place in the family as well as what parents are.

Zetti: In our home they used to kiss the father's hand and pay respect in a similar fashion. In our home we pay respect to father, just as it was abroad (Morocco). On festivals we also pay respect to Grandfather; for example, we give him presents. Each one brings him shoes, a shirt and so on.

Ruthy: In our house there is nothing like that. Being a little child does not mean that he must kiss everyone's hand. He does not have to be a slave. He must be polite.

Tzippora: In our home the father does not occupy a special position but we pay him respect. The same goes for Grandfather and Grandmother. We don't have to kiss their hands just because they are Grandfather and Grandmother.

Rika: I remember when I was a little girl I did that only at festival times or on Friday night after the blessing over the wine. After Father had said the blessing, or on the night of Passover or the New Year, we did kiss him, but in the normal way. Today such a thing is almost non-existent because the Sabras are not prepared to do it.

Pnina: If we love someone, we pay respect and kiss him of our own accord, but this is not a custom except for respect and love. We do not kiss whom we do not love.

The book by Abraham Shtal, "Edot Mesaprot" (Folklore tales), published by Tarbut veHinuch, Jerusalem, under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education and Culture (the Department of Religious Education), was distributed among the experimental teachers in order that they might select some passages from it to relate to the participating parents at one of the discussion groups.

The reaction of the mothers from the Oriental communities was particularly interesting. They were caught up in an immense associative current and told similar tales that they recalled from their childhood. An interesting event in this connection took place many months after the project had ended. The kindergarten teacher who had taken part in the project told me "When we were discussing the precept 'Hon thy father and thy mother', a child came and said "My mother read me a story about that." The teacher asked him to tell her the story and great was her amazement when she recognized the story as being "Hon thy Father " from the book "Edot Mesaprot", a story told by Syrian Jews. The child's mother had taken part in the project the year before, and this incident proved how much her mode of interaction with her child had been enriched by the addition of an authentic dimension to her education of the child". The family in question came from Syria.

Here now are two stories as told to their teacher by two children whose parents had come from Iraq and who, in the previous year, had taken part in the discussion groups and made use of the book "Edot Mesaprot" in order to teach their children the precept "Hon thy Father and thy Mother". The teacher noted down, with great accuracy, the stories of the two children.

Yossie: "Once upon a time there was an old man, and he was put in a timber store-room and given torn clothing. They gave him bread to eat, only bread. Once, his son was asked by the wise man who said to him "Who is that in the timber store-room? Who is that man in rags?" The son answered "That is my father." The son took rags and put them in a cupboard of valuable vessels. His father said to him "Why are you doing this?" The son answered "This is how you taught me to honour you. I did so." The father knew that this was not the way to

00072

treat old people. Afterwards they took him out of the store-room, gave him good food fit for kings, beautiful clothing of old people, and wine".

Uri: "Once upon a time there was a man who used to put his old father in a timber store-room and gave him rags as clothing. Afterwards a son was born to him. He said to him "Who is that? Who is that in the timber store-room?" His father answered him "That is your grandfather, my father." The child took rags and put them in a cupboard. His father came and said to him "It isn't respectful of the father to put him in a store-room. My own son taught me that."

Although the two versions are not identical, the essential meaning of the story has been grasped. The child's identification with the atmosphere of the story is evident in both cases. There is a familiar atmosphere and clear concepts such as the old man, the royal clothes, rags, wine, symbols of a recognizable life-style. The teacher remarked that the children asked to be able to tell the story to their comrades "exactly as mother has told it from the book."

4. We shall now follow with a number of examples* from group discussions which dealt on the didactic plane with kindergartens for disadvantaged children. The teacher asked the parents three kinds of questions that were subdivided into other questions:

a. What things do you teach at home (now, when and to whom?)
b. What are the important things that you think should be taught to the children?
c. What, in your opinion, are the important things that the child should be taught in the kindergarten?

Kindergarten I

Teacher: The child comes to the kindergarten with a lot of knowledge. Some of them know colours, some of them can count, some of them know objects and their properties - all these things they are surely taught at home. What we would like to hear is how they are taught, and we shall discuss it together. Perhaps you wish to tell us what are the concepts that you teach at home, what

*All the examples are taken from recordings of discussions made at kindergartens for disadvantaged on 17.1.72, 16.4.72, 26.4.72, 10.5.72, and 15.5.72.

00073

you think is worth teaching them in the kindergarten and what you, as parents, teach your children from the time that they are very small. From the time the child is born, what do you teach him?

Parent: To recognize objects. It might be a toy. We teach him what to call the toy, and he identifies it by its shape.

[illegible]: To know belongings. What else do you teach him?

Mother: As soon as you go out with the child, the child himself begins to awaken and ask questions. When he is a little older and begins to talk more fluently, he asks about everything "What is that? What is that?"

Mother: The child becomes interested and he receives answers.

Mother: So whenever he asks, does he receive an answer?

Mother: If the child is shy and doesn't ask many questions, we open his eyes and explain to him "Look at this or that. This is called so, and so forth." Sometimes there are children who are really withdrawn and do not ask many questions and sometimes they are the ones who know most.

Mother: At home I don't know, but I think that it is good for a child to know the names of trees and flowers in the neighbo[illegible] This gives him a great deal, the fact that he can distinguish this or that butterfly. If he asks about the col[illegible] of a given butterfly, for instance the white butterfly that is called "cabbage butterfly", at times you really do remember it and can tell the child, and then he knows and it will always be of use to him. And he also likes to know the names of animals and plants in the area, the seasonal flowers, for instance.

Mother: They learn from everyday life at home. They know that milk has to be put in the refrigerator since otherwise it [illegible] leave food out, the flies swarm over it. They are sensible and they see what goes on every day.

Kindergarten teacher: I want to ask you how things which seem logical

00074

to us become logical to them as well. Are things really logical to the child? Are reasons really clear to him?

Mother: It may be that he sees his mother doing this every day.

Mother: Does the mother only do it by force of habit or because she knows? Does the child also know?

Mother: I think that they also know, and it is also surely through habit.

Mother: He lives at home and sees everything and understands.

Mother: Sometimes they see something overflow which I don't spot, and they call out "Mother, quick, you've got to turn it off." What's wrong? "Everything is overflowing there." I sometimes really don't see it, and she does. They spot it immediately because they see it every day and they know that it might do something. How do they know it? They see it or smell it and tell me that something is burning.

Kindergarten II

Kindergarten teacher: Our topic this evening is the book and the story. This week is Hebrew Book Week. Many of us take this opportunity to acquire books. We are faced with many offerings, a huge variety of colours, fine bindings. The children as a rule say "Buy for me." By what standards do you choose the best books from among all the books that are offered to you?

Lea: Educational books.

Question: What do you mean?

Lea: Different kinds of circles and triangles.

Question: What sphere of education are you alluding to?

Lea: Geometry. I think it is important for the child at kindergarten age to already know what a circle is and what a triangle is.

Mother: It depends on what the child likes. For example, my child likes stories and I always prefer to buy her stories. Once she received a book about television, and it didn't interest her one bit. I read her the first page, the second page. The rest she refused to listen to.

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Question: Why didn't it interest her?

Answer: "Stop, stop," she said. She wouldn't have it on any account. She insisted that it wasn't interesting. It's the only book that she wouldn't read for anything.

Mother: I buy books for Joel according to what he chooses. I cannot choose for him. It has to be according to his taste.

Question: How does he go about choosing books?

Answer: He loves the garden, flowers, nature, things like that. This is what he chooses.

Question: And have you never had occasion to buy him a book that you yourself chose?

Answer: No.

Question: Let us suppose that you were allowed to choose, as you wished, books for your child. What do you think you would choose and why would you choose it?

Answer: I would choose more educational books on arithmetic, geometry, and many other things such as behavi politeness, food and so on.

Gideon: I bought two books during Book Week for the little boy and the little girl. For my boy I bought a book with all kinds of stories, stories about a swing, about a bird. For the little girl I bought a book about all kinds of birds and animals. My son chooses stories according to the drawings. If there is a drawing, he remembers the drawing and he has the picture of the story itself. For example, there is a story in which two children are on a swing. I read him the story, and he understood it very well. The photograph in the book helped him to understand the story itself.

I can tell him a story, and he hears it, but he doesn't understand, doesn't take it in. I am talking about my little boy. But the picture itself helps, and usually he chooses stories, but he chooses them according to the pictures. If there is a book about animals he sees on the first page a picture of a dog, or a bird. He knows that it is a book about animals. But when I take him a book about aeroplanes, he sees an aeroplane. The story is already harder for

him to understand and he knows that it is difficult. There is nothing in the story that interests him in particular.

Mother: They have all kinds of aeroplanes and there is also a ship there. In the book, they try to put wheels on the ship. I saw the book, and it is funny, but it is not true. That makes the child ask himself whether wheels are more suitable for an aeroplane or for a boat. This is what makes him think.

Gideon: He really did have a book like that - a ship with wheels and a car with oars and he said "The car doesn't have oars."

Wanda: It really does help the child greatly if there is a picture, especially when the picture has to be painted since it doesn't yet have any colour. First we read and talk about it, and then, when he paints it, he gains a great deal. He becomes more stable and knows all about what he is being told.

Shoshana: I think that there are books which teach the child, but it depends on whether it attracts him, the field of science, etc. But there are children who are not attracted to it. Children, in the course of time, grow up, go to school and study, and their minds develop.

Kindergarten teacher: Explain yourself more fully. How can you say that a child likes a book when you also say that he doesn't understand it or that it doesn't interest him.

Shoshana: Little by little. It goes by stages. First of all, at kindergarten age, I think that he must be taught what I was referring to, geometrical shapes. Then, he must be bought books that he can learn from; for example, about helping others. Then he can learn from the book itself about a little girl or boy (in the book) with whom he can identify. He can think about what he would do in their place. There are, of course, all kinds of stories. The child should learn from the hero of the story. Sometimes many children identify with the same hero.

Gideon: As a rule all children, even small children, when they are taught something new, at first recoil from it. Whether it is a game or it is something presented in an educational manner, he recoils.

You have to give it to him gradually.

The story itself, for example, I once told my son a story about a rocket.

5. Social problems also interested the parents greatly. There follows a discussion, for example, which dealt with the problem of "the child and society."

Kindergarten Teacher: Good evening. The topic of our discussion this evening is the child and society. The social framework is a necessary condition for the upbringing and the development of a person, both from the spiritual and the physical points of view. The society where the child grows up has an enormous influence on his education and upbringing. All his life he spends in a society of one kind or another. It may be the family, the kindergarten, the school, the army or work. The first of these social frameworks, as mentioned, is the family into which the person is born. And in this framework the child learns his

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How do you, as parents, educate the child in preparation for his social life in the future.

Parent: It is truly a difficult task. It isn't a matter of guesswork, it is something that has to be thought about and that is a problem. It is the biggest problem confronting us.

Teacher: Why is it a big problem today especially?

Shlomo: Today it is a problem because I cannot give my child permission to go out on the street and make friends with children who will first of all teach him to swear and tell him what the permissive girls do, and similar things. For example, here is an instance: one boy took the son of a neighbor to a street or garden near here. They saw a closed place, not one hermetically sealed, one they were able to get into, but still closed, like this kindergarten. Another boy entered with them, they found sweets there, and they took them. Now this boy has learned something. What does it mean, "learned?" Every child has longings and he can extend his

hand, but if the parents don't ask him where he went and where he got those things, then they will not prevent the blow before it comes. A child is liable to get into trouble. That is the nature of a child. But he must be firmly told that here there is a limit beyond which he must not go and that what is beyond that limit is not for him. Even if there is no limit or fence, only a house, or a room, he must not enter. In this case, it was my daughter. But I gave her a good spanking and a scolding and she finally promised me that she would not go there again. She said that someone led her astray and took her with him, but she only went inside and didn't eat anything.

Teacher: How do we, as parents, see to it that there should be as few bad influences as possible on the child?

Rahamim: It also depends where he studies. If he gets homework for one or two hours, sleeps an hour in the afternoon and then spends another hour writing or drawing something which has to be done for the next day, he has already lost his excessive freedom. Evening soon comes and it is television time. There is a program he wants to see, and at eight-thirty he goes to sleep. You have to keep the child occupied, whether at kindergarten or at school, and at home too.

Teacher: You are speaking of a framework which isn't a framework like the street, as you call it. But perhaps before these negative influences let us consider....

Gideon: A child is like clay in the potter's hands. The potters are the parents, and there are good potters and bad potters. There is a good society and bad society. As the father of my son I confront him with this reality. If children swear, he knows that they are using swear-words, but he knows also that this is an ugly thing, and that one must avoid swearing. Or, for example, there are bad children, and he knows that they are bad. One boy always takes from others, my son tells me; he always takes "bites" from other children. My son knows that he is a bad boy. But my job is to guide him, to direct him, so that if he sees that the boy takes "bites", he knows that it is not worth making friends with him.

Parent: Explain what it means to take "bites".

Gideon: If a boy is eating lollipops, ice cream, Cassata, or such things, the other boy comes and steals it from him. That's how children act. Our duty, as parents,is to set the child upon the right path and to do so in such a way that he also knows what is wrong.

There are swear words. The child knows that there are swear words in the street, as there are in the kindergarten, and everywhere else. But I tell him that it is ugly to swear, that it is wrong to hit. It is my duty to ensure that he does not do these things. I must show him the reality, that there are good things and bad things.

Parent: But how can you do this? You are at home; your child is in the street.

Gideon: For instance, if he comes and tells me that there is one boy in the street who takes things from other children, hen I tell him "Don't make friends with that boy. If you make friends with him, you will also begin to take things from other children. When a child has something that thing is the possession of the child himself, whether it is a pencil or food or any other thing. It is not yours, and you must not take it." This is the way I do it.

Parent: I think it depends on the child's age.

Parent: Good. We are talking about children of compulsory kindergarten age. This is the basis, the foundation.

Parent: I agree with what Rahamim said, but it doesn't mean that you should keep the child at home all the time. Afterwards, he turns into a wild beast. You cannot say "Give him a lot of homework." He must also see bad children. It is like food. The child eats everything. Good or bad, he swallows everything. He must go out and play with the children. You cannot stop him. However, the father or mother must keep an eye on him, follow him. I cannot force my son or daughter to stay at home. It is impossible because after that he turns into a wild animal. Afterwards, he will not be able to use new words. He will hear new terms from other children, and

he will learn certain actions, if he is at home within a framework. I think that thirty or fifty years ago children were part of the family framework. The family determined whether the child was good or bad. If the family was a good one, then the child was good. But today the family does not determine, today society determines. This is the big change here in Israel.

Today people don't say that the Zobroski family is a good family or a bad family; today they ask, who his friends are, first of all, and if the child doesn't learn by himself that a child is bad, it will not help to prove to him that he didn't know. The father and mother must make sure at the start that the child learns first of all that he must not lift a hand against others and that others must not hit him, or as Gideon said, that he must not take food from others.

6. One of the central topics in the discussion groups was: What is a good child? And here are a number of examples from discussions on this topic.

Kindergarten I:

Parent: I say that a good child is a healthy child; if a child is unruly, it doesn't mean that he is no good. On the contrary, he is healthy. I like them to be wild. It is healthy for his spirit.

Sally: The good child is the one that is equal to all situations. This means that he can cope with everything. In short, a normal child is a good child. If he has to act wild, then he should. If he has to hit, let him, and if others hit him, then he should hit back. Such a child can cope in all situations. A child that understands how to give and what to take is good in my mind. A complete child is a good child. This is what a complete child is; if someone hits him, he doesn't come saying, "Mother, he hit me. Hit him back for me." A child doesn't have to be ten years old before he is able to judge himself and for himself. He should be equipped for it from the beginning.

Parent: That isn't called independence. A good child is full of wisdom who can explain himself and can make himself understood. This means, for example, when Ilan comes with an injury to his eye which he got through

00081

being hit by a stone, he explains to me that not he but the other boy started the fight. He threw a stone at him. "And what did you do?" "I hit him back". I said: "You did well, but don't throw a stone back at him because it can be dangerous." And he understands. As he is frank with me, I can caution him not to throw a stone back, because though the other stone may not have taken out an eye, his stone might do so, and that is bad. But it is good that he hit him back. In this way the child gets his own back and is able to do something on his own account. Sometimes he was hit or a stone was thrown at him and he did not react. This gave him a feeling of inferiority and he could not look at himself. If a child falls, he falls. So what! If he is hurt, then we clean it, we look at the wound and put on iodine. That is the end of it. No bandages or anything else.

A good child must listen to his mother, and if he goes with his friends, he must do what the others want, and not spoil all their plans for them.

Sally: An ordinary child must find his place. Yesterday, for example, we were in a hall, and I want to say that I didn't tell the children not to leave their seats. Believe me, they really did master themselves and didn't run around in the center of the hall.

Parent: But what is so bad about that?

Sally: No, that is something I cannot agree with; it amounts to disturbing others. At home we make ourselves comfortable, but to be a nuisance to others in the hall, that is a disturbance, it is not pleasant, and in my opinion it is not nice.

Parent: May I say something. That child doesn't enjoy himself at all.

Sally: What sense is there in enjoying oneself at the expense of others? To spoil their celebration? The child must know how to enjoy himself while sitting in a chair and being a good boy.

Parent: You might just as well have him sit at home.

Sally: Why, I want him to mix socially and to learn the manners of society.

00082

Parent: You are hindering the child.

Sally: I hinder the child whenever I am a guest at someone's home.

Parent: Do you take him in order to enjoy himself?

Sally: I take him because he is invited, and also so that he will see how it is to mix socially, among many people, and will not suddenly grow up and not know how to behave. He has to know what such a big gathering means, doesn't he! - To be there and to behave there. What you do downstairs with your friends on the grass, with your Popeye shirt and your sandals in the tree, is your own affair, and this he has to know.

Parent: I was at a kibbutz on the Passover night. I won't say that I allowed her to run wild, but she wanted to see what was going on and if I had kept her sitting beside me all the time she would not have enjoyed anything.

Sally: So let her go and stand on the side and not make a disturbance in the center.

Parent: But she wasn't the only one who got up.

Yaffa: A child should be like everyone else in the group.

Sally: A person is judged according to his behaviour, by his outer appearance, by the way he sits at a table. It simply sets an example. If I am right, then every example has a story with it.

At the same place where I told you that my child ate nicely, there was a boy whose like I would not wish you to know. I was so sorry for his parents. It was something out of the ordinary. He gorged himself, ate like a beast, one plateful after another. It was a horrible feeling, and in his mother's place I would have got up and gone home and kept such a jewel to myself and not exhibit him for all to see. It was a disgrace. It starts from infancy and from bad guidance. As a matter of fact, I don't take my children with me, if you must know, but this was my husband's family, and they did really take that child.

Teacher: How does a child become good in your opinion?

Sally: It is up to the parents to guide him, and it is very important. When a child reaches kindergarten, he brings something from home with him. Even the older children say it "That is from mother's home." These are things that are not learned in school; neither the kindergarten nor the school know what they are. It comes from the parents. I don't wish to make out that I am someone special. I am only a housewife, but I have a very acute vision, and I know what someone else is liable to think. I cannot agree to a negative criticism.

Mother: What do I care if they criticize me?

Parent: I care a lot.

Sally: I want to tell you that parents now are in a very, very difficult position. The gap in age and interests, it really makes the mind boggle. You just can't get to the child in any way by explanation; for then they consider that we are weak and they tread all over us. We have just to show that we are the ones that know best, even when they really do know better than we, and they are very clever, but we must on no account have them think we are fools. We must strengthen our own position and have them know that as father and mother we are the ones that make the decisions, and that's that.

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7. The teachers related that one of the most popular topics concerned the parents' recollections of the festivals as they were celebrated in their countries of origin. Their recollections center around the preparations for the festival and the special delicacies, the special atmosphere, that prevailed in the Jewish quarter during the festival itself. We shall now present some passages from the parents' memories of the festivals as they were recorded in three kindergartens during the discussions.

A. The Passover Festival

Kindergarten I

Iraq: I can remember how the rooms were whitewashed and the special utensils. Each Passover we used, on the night before the Passover seder, to bring a sheep home, slaughter it in the courtyard of the house, and use it as much as possible like the Passover sacrifice. And then father would begin to explain as the Haggada does, in simple language

so that everyone could understand. As a family we appeared to be something very special.

I remember how we changed the mattresses and the wool, whitewashed and cleaned, how we got the clothes ready for the children, shoes, dresses, everything new. Even when there was enough, we wanted to wear something new on Passover. I can still remember what we did on the last day. We took a few pieces of bread and put them in paper and burned them. We lit a candle and said the "Al Bdikat Hometz" (the search for the leavened bread).

Persia: The baking of the unleavened bread (Matzot) took place in the synagogue. I was a little girl in Persia, and I don't remember the dates exactly, but on the last few days before the festival we would go to the synagogue, and in the courtyard there, the men especially were busy kneading and baking.

The smell of those Matzot!! - we wanted to taste a bit and they wouldn't allow us. It was forbidden! To this day that smell has remained with me when I see the matzot on Passover. Even though there are matzot in the shops the whole year, the Passover matzot have a special smell.

Yes, I can remember that they wore special dresses and aprons when they prepared the Matzot. It was a holy work for the whole community.

Iraq: At home in Iraq we used to prepare for six months beforehand. The rice was cleaned three times, the last time by a pregnant woman.

My father, blessed be his memory, distributed rice and wheat to the poor.

The aura of sanctity connected with the festival abroad was due to our distance from the Holy Land. We were remote from all Jewishness and we waited for the festivals in order to show our Jewishness, to remember and to listen.

I remember that there was a discussion about to whom to give the afikomen. If they were to give it to an old man, they thought that he might not live long and that he would need it for burial, and

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if they give it to a young man, he might need it to get married and would take it to his nuptials. Or if it was given to a young boy of twelve, the following year would be his Bar-Mitzva, so what was to be done? Finally, it was given to a man who was both good and trustworthy, and he was entrusted with it. We, the children, would run around trying to get the piece of unleavened bread away from him, for when we did manage to do so we got a gift. Only very seldom did we succeed in getting hold of the Afikomen.

Kindergarten 2

Iraq:

Tu B'Shvat

On the eve of Tu B'Shvat, the mother prepared a table with fruit (seven species) from the ground and the tree for blessing. They also cooked turnip and celery in sweet water.

Chanuka

As the festival began my father would light the lamp of oil and wick (there were also Hanukiot lamps with candles), and we would sing Hanuka songs every evening, and father would say the blessing.

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We had no special

Passover

A month before the festival a special room was cleaned and all the utensils were brought out year after year (vessels of porcelain, pottery and silver). The metal utensils that had been in use the whole year were soaked in a vat of boiling water which contained a stone and seven sharp pointed irons that were made red-hot in the fire and which, while a special blessing was recited (I don't remember it), were thrust into the water (I don't know the reason why).

Various food items were cleaned (rice, different kinds of seeds like melon seeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and so on) and kept in a guarded room.

The matzot were baked at home. Flour for this purpose was not

bought because of the doubt about it, and so they would prepare wheat and clean it and thresh it in a special place that was set aside for this.

On this festival, the emphasis was laid upon dress, as they say, from head to toes, including undergarments, handkerchiefs, ties, and ribbons for the children's hair.

We would prepare the Charoset (mixture to sweeten the bitter herbs) ourselves from dates and walnuts only.

On the Passover night at the Seder table the father sat at the head of the table in the seat of honour his eldest son sat beside him, on his right hand side, and the mother sat opposite him. We would read the Passover Haggada once in Hebrew and once in Arabic translation.

Before the "Ma Nishtana", Father would rise and ask those who were seated "From where have you come?" and all would answer "From Egypt." "And where are you going?" and they answered "To Jerusalem." "And what is in your vessels?" and then all would ask the Four Questions. When the Ten Plagues were recited, they would spill drops from the wine cup (pure silver) into a box intended for this, and one of the family would take it quietly and clandestinely pour it out at the entrance of non-Jewish homes or at street corners where no Jews lived.

While the Haggada was being read, we ate only from the symbolic platter, and only when the reading was over did we eat the meal.

The following day, in the morning, the children would wait impatiently to once more put on their new holiday clothes. Mother would distribute to each child a bag full of walnuts and almonds. I remember that we played with walnuts.

When the end of the Festival arrived, the leavened bread, especially "Pitot", was gotten ready and dates and yoghurt were served. Also everybody received a herb called "Halba", and each person would strike his neighbour and pronounce a blessing for a long life.

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In asra, the port city, they used to go out in boats with an orchestra.

Shavuot (Pentacost)

We would lay a festive table with regular food. The only special prepared for this festival was made of dough fried in butter. Powdered sugar was then sprinkled on it. This food was called "Kehi". On this festival, people sprinkled water on each other and became very boisterous, though I don't know why.

Egypt:

Tu B'Shvat

We would prepare all sorts of dried fruits and bake little cakes filled with dates and almonds and hold a festive meal.

Chanuka

We had a special ledge for the Festival of Chanuka, and we used to decorate it and place the Chanuka Lamp, which was made of special glasses which were kept year after year, on it. These glasses were filled with oil and a wick was set in them. Father would recite the blessing and light the light on the first evening, and the remaining lights were lit by the children, girls as well as boys. We used to make yeast doughnuts filled with jam and honey.

Passover

The preparation for this festival, whitewashing the house, painting it and getting clothing ready for the family, would begin two months early. In our house, there was a special room for the leavened bread. A week before the festival it was forbidden to go into any room except the room for the leavened bread. The special utensils for the Passover were kept year after year in a special place. We baked only special cakes from Matza meal, with coconut and almonds, like " etits-fours." A day before the Seder we would go to the bakery and kinds of seeds: pumpkin, sunflower, etc.

The same day, before daybreak, the beadle of the synagogue would

00088

go around ringing a bell in the neighbourhood (a Jewish neighbourhood) and awaken the women so they could hurry and come to the courtyard of the synagogue, bringing the utensils for the ritual cleansing.

When the Seder Night arrived, the menfolk went to the synagogue and the women in the family laid the table.

I remember that at first, at the start of the Seder, they inserted a piece of Matza in the napkins of each one seated around the table. In the middle of the reading of the Passover Haggada (I cannot remember the passage) they would place the napkins on their shoulders and father would ask each person separately: "From where do you come?" "From Egypt." "Where are you going?" "To Jerusalem." Father then asked, "What is in your vessel?" "Matzot." I think that the napkins and matza were a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

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The Seder service lasted for about three hours. When the festival ended, we ate "pitot" and cooked rice porridge, and we served fish, pickles, and even sweetmeats. Greenery was placed in all parts of the house, spring onion, lettuce, and another vegetable called "nelna", that doesn't grow in Israel.

Shavuot

A festive meal and sweetmeats (I don't remember more).

Persia:

Tu B'Shvat

We used to plant saplings, eat dried fruit, and bake sweet cakes.

Chanuka

Father would light the oil lamp. We had a custom (I don't know why) of placing all our gold ornaments such as bracelets, chains, rings and so on in a basin of oil. It was customary to receive Chanuka money. We always used to go on outings on this festival.

Passover

I can remember that in our home we used to make preparations a month before the festival. We cleaned the utensils thoroughly, poured boiling water over the table and cleansed it, and then we cleansed the utensils on it.

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We used to hold the Seder at Grandfather's. A mattress was placed on the sofa and we read the Hag until the morning and each member of the family would read a certain passage.

Bengazi:

Tu B'Shvat

Father used to bring home dried and fresh fruits, whatever there was in the market, according to the law, up to forty species. Mother would cook festive on the table there was also wine that father had prepared himself, for we were afraid of the Arabs. The fruits were laid on the table, and blessings were recited. Father used to give every child a plate full of fruit.

Chanuka

There was an oil lamp of brass that father would light only when all the children had gathered around him. Each day of the festival, mother would set a festive table. We used to eat pancakes made of yeast dough fried in oil with sugar or honey sprinkled over them.

We also had a custom of Mother's filling a basin with sweets and distributing them to the poor or to the students of the "Talmud Tora" seminary. We used to make our own spinning tops, and I recall how we played with them. It was possible to buy them, but most of the children made them themselves.

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A week before Independence Day we visited a mixed neighbourhood in which there live new immigrants from all over the Diaspora and also Arabs. There were present twelve mothers from Morocco, three from Iraq, four from Rumania, and 21 from the Soviet Union. The discussion centered on reminiscences about Independence Day, and here are some extracts from the discussion which lasted an hour:

Kindergarten Teacher: Here, you are new immigrants. Who can remember how you celebrated Independence Day in Morocco, in Tunis, in Russia, in Rumania?

Mother 1 (Iraq): I remember that when they said that it was Independence Day in Israel we were all afraid. We were afraid that the Arabs would fall upon us and kill many of us. We shut the blinds and father was very sad.

Mother 2 (Morocco): We were also very afraid the whole of Independence Day. Once the Arabs came and burnt two Jews. How we were frightened! The Russians didn't suffer at all; they weren't afraid a bit.

Mother 3 (Soviet Union): What? What are you saying? That we weren't afraid? We were so frightened that we didn't sleep at night. We were afraid that they might come any moment from the K.G.B., take us away, and that would be it. What are you talking about? What are you saying?

Mother 2 (Morocco): What? You think I don't know? All of us Jews suffer everywhere. Yes, we are one people and we all suffer together, but we don't live so much together. And what's more, here I am living among Arabs now. I have a very nice Arab neighbour. I don't know how to bring up my little girl, to teach her to hate the Arabs, or not? I really don't know. She is so nice and her children are clean, but when I recall how it was among them in Morocco, I don't know how -

Mother 4 (Rumania): I think that hate should not be taught. Hate is always bad; it always causes wars. How is that Arab woman guilty of the fact that they burnt the Jews in your street?

Mother 1 (Iraq): It's easy to say, but it is very difficult in reality to behave like that.

00091

Mother 5 (Morocco): I can only remember that my brother fell in the Six Day War and how the whole neighbo the whole neighbo came to see us. And the little children thought they were just guests, only everyone was crying. This is also very hard to tell them "Your uncle has been killed," just like that. It is hard, like the question that Mrs.....asked about the Arabs.....

The teacher summed up the discussion. The common destiny of the Jewish People in Israel and the Diaspora and the whole problem of its existence and fight for survival were reflected in this discussion group.

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VI. SUMMING UP OF CONCLUSIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

1. Findings of the Project - Conclusions from Stage One

The comparison of the first with the final survey revealed a change in the attitudes of the kindergarten teachers who experienced the discussion groups with parents from different communities and social levels. They discovered that the parents were human beings capable of thinking and expressing their thoughts and of making significant suggestions with regard to the education of their children. They also were impressed by the culture and life style of the disadvantaged parents, a culture that had previously been alien to them, and they came to realize that their own personalities had been enriched at the individual and professional levels as a result of their meetings with the parents. They also discovered that there was a rich potential in the knowledge with which the parents could furnish the teacher in order to provide a fruitful background for the understanding of the child and of his behaviour in the kindergarten. The educational aspiration that finds expression in the phrase "educate the child according to his own individuality" achieved its initial realization in the broadening of the educator's ability to view the child against his parental, home and area background. It is possible that following this new perspective, educational and pedagogical attitudes will be adapted to the tempo of the individual development of each child.

The teachers in the experiment pointed out additional proficiencies that they had acquired: the ability to feel for other people and the ability to listen to what others say. From this, they also began to discover a pluralistic approach to the values and behaviour of people from various communities.

As a result of the project, the parents came to realize that they were people of worth, able to teach and learn from one another. The parents expressed wonder and amazement that they were asked their opinions and that their ideas were carefully considered. They felt that their remarks were sincerely and appreciatively received. This feeling of a meeting of equals developed a new relationship between parents and teachers, a relationship of true respect and friendship.

Perhaps this is the start of a most significant democratic cooperation,

90093

a democracy that has a "threefold" meaning, as it was termed by the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Yigal Alon, at an international convention on the care of disadvantaged children that was held in 1972 in Jersualem under the auspices of the Van Leer Foundation. The Minister termed the democratic "trinity" the combination of political, social and cultural democracy.

2. The Special Findings of "Kedmah"

A. Involvement of the Fathers

The fathers of little children as a rule leave the education of the child to the mother. Thus, in most cases, the mother is the family representative at meetings with the educational establishment, whether at parents' meetings in the kindergarten or at parties. There was a noticeable shift within the discussion groups since at every kindergarten, whether for the disadvantaged or for the middle class child, fathers began attending the discussions. Although they were few in number, they did come consistently and took an active part in the discussions. There are valid projections for the father as an educational factor.

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B. The Sense of "Togetherness" in Heterogeneous Neighb[illegible]

The personal biographies related within the discussion groups revealed the common and diverse aspects of the customs of Israel's communities, customs of rejoicing and mourning, preparation for festivals, Jewish suffering in the entire Diaspora (in Tunis, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Rumania and Russia). The various communities, of new immigrants and veterans, were brought together.

C. Repercussions of the Project in the Neighb[illegible]

The "Kedmah" project has caused repercussions in the various neighbo[illegible]s. The very fact that once a fortnight the lights (electric or candle) burned in the kindergarten for three hours and more aroused interest among the inhabitants of the neighb[illegible] who wished to know what was "going on" there. Parents whose children went to other kindergartens, who didn't participate in the experiment, asked, "Why can't we have the same thing?" One or two teachers living in the area entertained the idea of transferring the method to their schools.

00094

D. Repercussions on the Radio and in the Press

The project was discussed in the press and on the radio. The discovery of the writer-mother was very impressive and brought in its wake interviews with her and talks about her. The ideas of the project were presented at an international gathering that dealt with the problems of disadvantaged children. Here we include a passage from the report on the convention:

CurSam/PR/17/Dr. Rep.
Jerusalem, 24 Nov. 1972

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BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION

SEMINAR ON CURRICULUM IN

COMPENSATORY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

(Jerusalem, 15-25 November 1972)

> Another point of view adopts a more positive approach to the potential contribution of the established sub-culture of the disadvantaged child to the educational process and, therefore, deliberately seeks to bring about direct parental involvement in the day-to-day work of the school. Such involvement affords a valuable opportunity for the enhancing of parental self-image, particularly when this is confronted by the pressures of a more dominant sub-culture. The positive discussion between parents and educators of various values, attitudes and customs, and the reinforcement of certain aspects of these, can have the effect of promoting parental self-confidence and a more constructive attitude towards their children and the school.
>
> Additionally, teacher awareness and use of the potential resources of the cultural inheritance of the disadvantaged can both enrich the overall educational process by ensuring more meaningful curricular content and heighten the teacher's appreciation of that inheritance.

E. Discovery of the Parents as Individuals

"Kedmah" discovered a number of talents among the parents and it impelled others to alter their usual behaviour. We have already mentioned the writer-mother who "emerged from her loneliness and depression" and the Yemenite father who proved himself a consummate teller of stories who entranced his audience. A grocer who despised his customers and took not the slightest interest in his children's upbringing began to take an active part in the discussion groups and changed his behaviour in all respects. Mothers whose relationships with their families were in a poor state discovered that their

00095

behavi with their children was not exceptional and that they could think constructively about their children and how to educate and bring them up.

3. Why "Kedmah" Succeeded

We do not know if the influence of the discussion groups on the thirteen kindergarten teachers and the 250 parents will endure. We do not know substantial changes have taken place in the attitudes of parents towards their children. Nor do we know whether the change that took place in the concepts of the experimental teachers will in fact lead to a significant change in their approach to the teaching program. However, for teachers and parents alike, the feeling was that something new and positive had occurred in their relationship. Without exception, they wished to continue these relationships.

We shall detail some of the reasons for our success as we understand them.

A. Contents of the Discussions

Despite the contents being pre-determined, teachers and parents were allowed great flexibility and the teachers could alter the agenda according to the interest aroused during the course of the discussion. This flexibility made it possible to adapt the topics to the problems that worried the parents and the teachers. A number of the topics that we decided upon enjoyed success in all the discussion groups. Such as: "What, in your opinion, is a good boy?" "How does one teach a child to be good?" "Childhood memories of parents of different countries of origin" "How do we enrich the child's language?" "How and when should we tell stories at home?"

B. The Feeling of Togetherness - Teamwork

This feeling of teamwork was created both among the experimental teachers themselves, and between the parents and the teachers. The frequent meetings, the informal atmosphere, the candour, the common struggles, the mutual anxieties and joys, all these brought those involved in the experiment very close together. Each problem was probed in depth and with utmost sincerity and frankness. The sharing of successes and rejoicings awakened the desire to continue despite the difficulties and the obstacles.

00096

C. The Devotion of the Teachers and the Parents to the Project

The constancy of attendance displayed by the parents and teachers at the discussion is praiseworthy. The difficult physical conditions, low chairs in the kindergartens, lack of adequate lighting, the recordings, in addition to the unknown factor of the discussion group itself, all these did not deter either the teachers or the parents. On the contrary, they continued to be attracted to the meetings. The discussions were characterized by great devotion, candour, mutual interest and respect between the parents and the teachers. All of these are components in the success of any human relationship.

D. Respectful Attitude to Different Approaches and Opinions

Each opinion that was expressed during the discussions, no matter how extreme or provoking, was subjected to a searching discussion that probed the heart of the matter without being either accusatory or negative. Each opinion was analyzed, considered, and viewed in all its aspects, both positive and negative. Thus was concensus achieved.

E. The Focus of the Discussions - The Parents and the Child

All the subjects of the discussions arose from the requirements of the parents and the children in the context of present-day Israel. The character of the discussions was not psychological but educational, featuring as a background the personal biographies (social and cultural) of the parents. The problems that arose were educational-didactic ones and were concerned with methods of educating and teaching in the home and in the kindergarten. An effort was thus made to combine the content of home and kindergarten and to combine the methods of the mother and of the teacher, thereby making the education of the child more meaningful.

These are a few of the reasons that we may adduce for the success of the research and the achievement of its goal, bringing parents and teachers closer together for the good of the growing child.

4. Suggestions for Further Evaluations

The "Kedmah" project invites further evaluation. Stage One attempted to summarize only a few of the changes that took place in the opinions expressed by the kindergarten teachers following the discussion groups. The

00097

wealth of recordings from the discussions awaits analysis of content and a more profound interpretation. Thus, various thoughts emerged in the course of the fieldwork that require evaluation and analysis.

Here are some suggestions for further research:

a. Did the discussion groups contribute to the strengthening of the "positive self-image" of the parents?

b. Does a direct connection exist between the "positive self-image" of a person and his attitude to his culture?

c. Has there been a noticeable effect as a result of the discussion groups on the parent-child relationship at home?

d. Do the parents extend to their treatment of their other, especially younger, children, the conclusions reached in the discussion groups?

e. Do the discussion groups exert an influence on social relationships within the neighbourhood?

f. Does the discussion group constitute a source of attraction for the fathers, and if so, why?

g. Do the discussion groups lead to changes in family relationships, and if so, why?

h. Does the kindergarten teacher apply the knowledge she has acquired as a result of the discussions to her practical work in the kindergarten?

Answers to the above questions, or to some of them, will enable conclusions to be drawn with regard to the contribution made to cooperation between the parents and the teachers by the discussion groups. Such cooperation can transform the educational environment of the child, both at home and in the kindergarten, into one in which he can grow and develop according to his capacity and ability and his knowledge of the world around him.

00098

Appendix A

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THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE DISCUSSIONS IN THE PARENT-TEACHER DISCUSSION GROUPS

The value-narrative-educational content

1. The Sabbath (two meetings)
2. What is a good child in your opinion ? (two meetings)
3. Birthday or Wedding (one meeting)
4. Parents' childhood memories - personal biography (This discussion also deals with the parents' suggestions on how and when to tell the stories of their childhood) (two or three meetings)
5. Imported folklore tales (Anthology of Oriental tales edited by Abraham Shtal) - this discussion also includes the parents' suggestions on what stories to tell and how, and when, to tell them (two meetings)

The educational-didactic content

1. At the first meeting the parents are asked what they teach the children at home and what, in their view, is important to teach the child in the kindergarten and at home. The parents make suggestions and determine the priorities. The program of the discussion groups is determined, therefore, by the parents.

Here are some examples of the didactic content of the discussion groups:

2. How to teach the child, at home and in the kindergarten, mathematical concepts.
3. How to teach the child, at home and in the kindergarten, colours.
4. How to teach the child, at home and in the kindergarten, about objects and their properties.
5. How to teach the child, at home and in the kindergarten, confidence and hygiene.
6. How to teach the child, at home and in the kindergarten, his place in his family and his relationship with the other members of the family, father, mother, older brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, uncle, etc.
7. How to teach the child language concepts.
8. How to teach the child, at home or in the kindergarten, his address.
9. How to teach the child about his house (manner of structure, furniture, etc.)

00099

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